

**Morgenthau *mal compris* :**  
**The Philosophical Roots of Hans Morgenthau's Political Realism**

It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs.

– Aristotle

I found again mine old devil and arch-enemy, the spirit of gravity, and all that it created: constraint, law, necessity and consequence and purpose and will and good and evil:-

– Nietzsche

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## **I: Thesis Introduction and Literature Review**

### **1.0 Morgenthau and International Relations: His Continuing Relevance**

In an often times ephemeral discipline, Hans J. Morgenthau and his political realism remains at or at least near the center of international relations (IR). With his peculiar manifestation of realism, he remains an important figure in international relations theory. His (in)famous *Politics among Nations* is coming out in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition, which will reinforce its continuing status as an essential text in the field of IR, a field that often seems ephemeral in terms of essential texts. This text popularized political realism (now called “classical” realism), a theory that remains a major fixture in international relations theory and which has spawned several progeny: neo-realism, offensive realism, defensive realism, neo-classical realism, and structural realism. Today, however, it seems the majority of the mobilization it provokes seems to be conducted *against* realism – that is, alternative theoretical stances are sought to counteract and undermine realism’s continued dominance of the discipline. Regardless of whether one is for or against realism, however, one still must engage with this text somehow. Moreover, the failure of alternative IR theories to have enough moral and/or pragmatic sense in guiding foreign policy (e.g. such as the neo-conservative agenda leading to another ‘Vietnam’ in Iraq) has led IR full-circle to a serious reinvestigation of classical realism. Many of the themes that Morgenthau dealt with, such as the tragic nature of international politics, his opposition to Vietnam and other unnecessary and imprudent foreign policy ventures, and how to construct a pragmatic yet moral foreign policy, all seem like ‘good ideas, but sadly too late’ to contemporary international relations. Despite this, classical realism seems to have the potential offer advice against future mistakes and possibly guidance toward a way out for those mistakes of today.

However, a recurring question in the field of international relation, and especially amongst the critics of new dissertations on the subject, is *what value does yet another reinterpretation of Morgenthau bring to international relations?* Alternatively, why

reinvestigate Morgenthau, and how is this reinterpretation distinct enough to be of value? After all, as pointed to above, there has already been serious reinvestigation of classical realism and many have already discussed it in relation to contemporary international relations. However, there are still many problems with readings of Hans Morgenthau today. The response this dissertation offers is fourfold:

1. Morgenthau's value lies in the fact that he can be used to address questions that have, until now, gone largely underdeveloped in international relations literature.<sup>1</sup> Two of these questions are the topic of this thesis: what is human nature and what is a proper ethical theory (e.g. consequentialism or deontology) for international relations theory. The question of human nature entails a corollary question: why does human nature matter when the units of IR analysis are states? Starting with Kenneth Waltz' theoretical revision, politics and international relations have moved further and further from human nature, traditionally an unscientific topic, except in the case of contractarian normative philosophy and economic analyses cases run with rational choice actors – both of which appeal to a very thin, uncontroversial, universal attributions of the characteristics that essentially constitute human being. Appealing to a vague and 'unscientific' notion such as human nature has been perceived as a theoretical weakness in international relations theory because it is unscientific.<sup>2</sup> And yet Morgenthau, placing himself in a philosophical genealogy stretching back to Plato, continuously stressed the centrality of human nature for understanding social science writ large, including international relations, and does so even in his magnum opus *Politics among Nations*. For Morgenthau, human nature was essential for the understanding of how states and societies behave.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is something that Morgenthau himself repeatedly lamented in his work. Particularly, his claim for coherence in "Cynicism, Perfectionism, and Realism in International Affairs" seems to imply that as politics shifted to a more realist, in the sense of *Realpolitik*, theoretical framework, he found himself having to argue against those realists instead of against the Kelsenian-type idealists from immediately after the Second World War.

<sup>2</sup> Guzzini, Stefano. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 187; for the centrality of human nature, see Murray, A. J. H. "The Moral Politics of Hans Morgenthau." *The Review of Politics*. (1996, 58.1), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations*. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 3; this is the first principle of realism. Cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Decline of Democratic*

Despite all of the reinterpretations of Morgenthau that have occurred in the classical realist/Morgenthau revival, the question of human nature, which Morgenthau took to be fundamental to politics writ large, has received little attention beyond the traditional reduction of human nature to the *animus dominandi*. By providing an analysis of his conception of human nature, some clues about all political phenomena can be provided that may, in a way, provide a better sense of Morgenthau's entire project.

2. Contemporary realists, in its broad sense encompassing neo-realism, classical realism, and all the other variants within the theory, have been losing in the war of ideas against neo-conservatism and liberalism (in both its political and normative senses) for some time now. Realism no longer has the same influence on foreign policy that it enjoyed in the past, and this may be because, in its current 'pragmatic' or scientific and even immoral manifestation, it seems to lack the philosophical and normative basis that the other two positions have, and this seems to arise from its Cold War realignment and association – especially as neo-realism – and this is a problem aggravated by over-simplifications of realism drawn from the Cold War classic *Politics among Nations*.<sup>4</sup> This is to say that an over scientific and immoral position, regardless of its utility, is unpalatable for many people. This decline and dismissal of realism, which seems to stem from neo-realism's perceived illegitimacy following the Cold War, has had profound consequences. These consequences have led to some recent major international political disasters at the hands of other theories of international relations.

What is most curious is that realists (both classical and neo-) seem to be united with so-called 'idealists' in their criticisms of recent events in international relations, such as the second Iraq War – even if their reasons and broader positions are not the

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*Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 41, 69, 121; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 254; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 117-118.

See below for a discussion of the significance of human nature for understanding how states and other supra-individual groups/institutions behave;

<sup>4</sup> Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 198.



same.<sup>5</sup> By reproducing the original foundational philosophy of Morgenthau's political realism, it is the hope that realism today can regain its nuanced position and have the capacity to engage with neo-conservatism, and "idealism," with a significantly greater rhetorical and theoretical capacity and coherence than it currently has.<sup>6</sup>

3. Morgenthau, as he is read now, lacks a clearly defined philosophical core. His realism is often assumed to be a simplistic theory, lacking the broader philosophical background that other theories of international relations have. Although reinterpretations have done much to argue against the traditional reading of Morgenthau, they have been less strong in drawing out the philosophical basis of his realism. Moreover, in spite of the growing literature reinterpreting Morgenthau's realism, the traditional, philosophically simplistic reading of Morgenthau persists even though it has been shown to be a wrong reading of Morgenthau. This is, in part, because the traditional reading, even if it is not right it offers something that other readings do not – a philosophically coherent core. And this is a powerful device for keeping a theory alive because coherence is a strong epistemological indication of truth.<sup>7</sup> However, it leads to a problem: the missing core of realism, pointed to in the article "Is Anybody Still a Realist?"<sup>8</sup> An absence of a philosophical core leads to confusion about realism in general and, consequently, the straw manning of realists by detractors.

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<sup>5</sup> Consider Walt and Mearsheimer's famous article 2003 anti-war article "An Unnecessary War." From *Foreign Policy*. (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 11-12, 203.

<sup>7</sup> A coherence theory claims that the justificability of a proposition rests upon a systematic coherence characteristic of a significant whole. Thus, when the analysis of a part leads to conclusions which are consistent with conclusions derived from other analyses. Given the nature of the investigation – a reinterpretation of Morgenthau – it is most reasonable to attempt to arrive to a coherent theory of what Morgenthau was at his rational core. Moreover, (not to be confused with claims to a foundationalist epistemology) the overlaps of these reinterpretations reflexively may help to establish the legitimacy of claims regarding Morgenthau's foundational metaphysics. Cf. Young, James O. "The Coherence Theory of Truth." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-coherence/>

<sup>8</sup> Legro, Jeffrey W. and Andrew Moravcsik. "Is Anybody still a Realist?" *International Security*. (1999, 24.2), 7. Their solution to this seems to derive primarily from a neo-realist approach (pp. 12-18) which are, interestingly enough, diametrically opposed to Morgenthau's theory as will be shown in this dissertation.

However, neither Morgenthau nor his political realism are philosophical vacuous. Morgenthau actually laid a profound then-contemporary philosophical foundation at the heart of his political realism and engaged on a personal level with some of the most profound minds of his day, including Hannah Arendt, the Frankfurt School, Karl Jaspers, Carl Schmitt, and Reinhold Niebuhr, not to mention his philosophical background in both Weber's social science methodology, Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel, and the Greeks. By drawing out the coherent, rational core of Morgenthau's realism with its philosophical bases, the confusion over who exactly a realist is can begin to be solved by addressing the problem at its root; by resolving confusion over who the paradigmatic realist was, it is hoped that the direction, meaning, and capacity of realism itself can be clarified. In addition, drawing out the philosophical core of Morgenthau should resolve some seeming contradictions in the contemporary reinterpretations without compromising their already well-established claims. Moreover, contemporary politics tends to fall either into the realm of normative philosophy or empirical political science.<sup>9</sup> In other words, it either tries to advance without so-called practical considerations at all or it discounts the majority of philosophy in its purely practical focus. These are both practices Morgenthau was critical of in his own work: philosophy was retreating into the irrelevancies of methodology and semantics or providing ideological justifications and rationalizations for the status quo, such as a naïve liberalism that was so preoccupied with arbitrary procedures it could do nothing as the agents who would execute those procedures tore it to pieces.<sup>10</sup> Empirical political science hardly fared better in his eyes, its concern for value-free scientific knowledge resulted in the counting of cobblestones – irrefutable but utterly meaningless expansion of empirical knowledge.<sup>11</sup> What he sought to do was bridge the two fields as much as

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<sup>9</sup> Lebow, Richard Ned. *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 380-382.

<sup>10</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Purpose of American Politics*. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 228; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 124; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 222-223.

<sup>11</sup> Lang Jr., Anthony. *Political Theory and International Affairs: Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*. (Westport: Praeger Paperback, 2004), 1099. Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 210-211, 214;

possible. Thus, by reinvestigating the philosophical roots of Morgenthau's realism and expanding upon it, this thesis can generate more robust "realist" answers to some of the questions about realism's philosophical basis through dialogue with contemporary philosophical issues.

4. Hans J. Morgenthau is not always as clear as he could be. Sometimes, this lack of clarity makes it seem he is theoretically incoherent and makes contradictory points at times. While it is not the case that Morgenthau was incoherent – in fact, he discusses this very point himself<sup>12</sup> – it is the case that Morgenthau's consistent rational core is difficult to arrive to because he tends to refer to foundational points in his work rather off-handedly and doesn't ground them well in either his own definitions or in the philosophical works that they seem to be derived from. Thus, a final task of this dissertation is to serve to clarify Morgenthau's project by grounding his claims in their philosophical roots and expanding upon the philosophical implications of such claims, and thus to provide the rational core of Morgenthau's realism that is so difficult to find.

There is a vast body of secondary literature on Morgenthau. It is possible to divide this literature into two basic camps: traditional interpretations of Morgenthau (which includes both sympathetic and hostile readings of Morgenthau, contemporary and otherwise) and contemporary reinterpretations of Morgenthau (recent reinterpretations that are sympathetic).

### **1.1 The Traditional Interpretation of Morgenthau's Methodology**

The traditional interpretation of Morgenthau has a strong basis in international relations theory. This is likely due to, as suggested above, the adoption of his *Politics among Nations* as a canonical text and the Cold War circumstances of its introduction. The value of *Politics among Nations* for Cold War political theory led to its reduction to several bullet

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Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 24-26, 118-121; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 18-24.

<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 127-130 ("Cynicism, Perfectionism, and Realism in International Affairs") and Morgenthau, Hans J. "Another 'Great Debate:' The National Interest of the United States." *The American Political Science Review*. (1952, 46.4).

points that could be easily digested and recalled when decision-makers and strategists encountered confusing points. Even today realism is still presented in this format in many of the text books and secondary literature on political theory.<sup>13</sup> Coupled with this, the traditional interpretation is very deep set (both among realists and detractors of realism), and it is not uncommon to encounter students of IR who “know” Morgenthau after a hasty reading of the six principles and feel no inclination to go further. However, any such simplification and reduction is bound to obscure and distill the work of a man who wrote several large volumes about political theory.

Regardless, the traditional interpretation has a strong root in international relations. This seems to be because realism is easily reducible to several axioms, although there are several varieties of these axiomatic reductions. The traditional interpretation of realism does tie into a strong philosophical tradition, in theory predating even Plato and Aristotle. This is sophism, and the earliest representative of is considered sometimes to be Thrasymachus from Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>14</sup> An alternative is sometimes found in Thucydides, and this attribution comes predominantly from a reading of his Melian dialogue.<sup>15</sup> Compliments should go to Thomas Johnson for presenting the best analysis of Morgenthau in this light – he does an amazing job of linking this interpretation of Morgenthau into sophism and presents the strongest philosophical reading of Morgenthau and political realism that does justice to the traditional interpretation as a valid philosophical position for realism to adopt.

This simplicity and axiomatic nature of the traditional understanding of realism has done a good deal in promoting the persistence of this particular theory, beyond its status as the traditional interpretation of political realism. There is some inconsistency regarding the nuances of realism, but despite this the coherence of the traditional interpretation of realism

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<sup>13</sup> Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7, 11; Freyberg-Inan, Annette. *What Moves Man*. (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 8, 64-65; Tickner, J. Ann. “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. (1988, 17.3), 430-431.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, Thomas J. “The Idea of Power Politics: The Sophistic Foundations of Realism.” In Benjamin Frankel (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 195.

<sup>15</sup> Although the realist conclusions of the Melian dialogue are considered to be superficial when they yield axioms similar to what Thrasymachus states, and there is a deeper understanding which negates the value any lessons from what happened to Melos. Cf. Strauss, Leo. *The City and Man*. (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1964).

remains, and many of these inconsistencies are resolvable to some degree within that general framework. The traditional interpretations of realism are held in common with the critics and adherents of realism, which is to say that there is little claim amongst most adherents of realism that the critics have misunderstood them. Defenders of realism do not attack their critics for a false characterization, but instead for mistaken conclusions drawn from that characterization.

Following this coherence between realism and its critics, an analysis can conveniently be distilled into several essential aspects, despite some minor irresolvable side issues (e.g. whether agents are rationally self-interested or simply driven by the *animus*):

- International relations is a realm of non-moral, “evil” agents
  - o These non-moral agents are either power-hungry amoral agents or insecure, self-interested immoral agents<sup>16</sup>
  - o These agents are reducible to a monistic feature (e.g. rationality, egoism, the *animus dominandi*, etc.), which allows some relevant degree of predictability and understanding in how they act and react in international relations<sup>17</sup>
- The absence of an institution that can sanction normative (moral) delicts among nation-states besides those very nation-states, coupled with the above non-moral

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<sup>16</sup> Donnelly, , 9-10, 47; Tickner, 431-433; Freyberg-Inan, 68, 78, 82-83, 86, 91; Pin-Fat Véronique. “The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the Mysticism of the Nation-State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau.” *Review of International Studies*. (2005, 31), 223, 224, 226; Tellis, Ashley J. “Reconstructing Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 40, 42; Wrightson, Patricia S. “Morality, Realism, and Foreign Affairs: A Normative Realist Approach.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 358, 385; Thayer, Bradley A. “Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism, and International Politics.” *International Security*. (2000, 25.2), 128-129; Legro and Moravcsik, 6, 12; Johnson, 241; Klusmeyer, Douglas. “Hannah Arendt’s Critical Realism: Power Justice, and Responsibility.” In Lang Jr., Anthony and John Williams (Eds.). *Hannah Arendt and International Relations: Readings across the Lines*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 136.

The distinction, here, being amorality is a lack of concern for morality while immorality is the recognition of morality but the breaking of its norms because of other concerns. Power-hungry agents don’t care about morality, whereas insecure agents care more about their survival than the moral code which they would uphold if not for the overriding concern.

<sup>17</sup> Donnelly, 9-10; Pin-Fat, 223; Barkawi, Tarak. “Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau, and Modern Strategic Studies.” *Review of International Studies*. (1998, 24.2), 162, 174; Tellis, 40, 42; Thayer, 125, 128-129; Freyberg-Inan, 68, 78, 91; Tickner, 431.

characteristics of agents, results in a state of anarchy, similar enough to the state of nature depicted in Hobbes' *Leviathan*.<sup>18</sup>

- Given the 'ontological' absence/impossibility of morality in international relations, consequentialist or amoralist reasoning is justified by the a priori absence of any justice and the corresponding necessity to guarantee one's survival and whatever "justice" can be attained; morality/justice are just means.<sup>19</sup>
- Power, as instrumental to survival, is the most legitimate means and end of international relations to meet the above conditions.<sup>20</sup>
- Therefore, statesmen, who are a priori concerned with the survival and well-being of their particular nation-state, will pursue power as their primary goal. This perpetuates the system, but, unfortunately, there is no escape from the dilemma of the pursuit of power.<sup>21</sup>
- The above behavior is scientific *law* (as rationalist determinism). Therefore, the conclusion, that a statesman must pursue power, is a law of politics that is (and ought to be) obeyed – one's interest in politics is only the pursuit of power. This interpretation stems, in part, from the traditional interpretation of Morgenthau as a positivist/empiricist in terms of epistemology, and attempts to derive scientific laws of politics, most famously in his *Politics among Nations* (but also in some of his legal works).<sup>22</sup>

Despite the divergences and differences, the different interpretations seem to share similar points. Moreover, the most essential aspect for the claims about realism and international relations is something they do share: that human nature is reducible to a fundamental component. Reducibility to a fundamental component yields necessarily consistent behavior, in theory. By deducing from this consistent behavior, one can produce scientific

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<sup>18</sup> Donnelly, 10; Rosecrance (from Molloy p. 75); Legro & Moravcsik, 6; Barkawi, 176, 183; Wrightson, 359; Freyberg-Inan, 64-65.; Klusmeyer, 120, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Barkawi, 173, 174; Tickner, 438; Wrightson, 357; Johnson, 241; Klusmeyer, 124-125, 149.

<sup>20</sup> Kaufman, Robert. "Morgenthau's Unrealistic Realism." *Yale Journal of International Affairs*. (2006), 24, 29; Legro & Moravcsik 22; Donnelly, 45, 47; Freyberg-Inan, 71, 86; Pichler, 196, 198; Barkawi, 160, 164; Wrightson, 358; Johnson, 243-244

<sup>21</sup> Donnelly, 45; Freyberg-Inan, 82-83, 86; Tickner, 432.

<sup>22</sup> Guzzini, 38; Freyberg-Inan, 70-71, 91, Tickner, 431-432.

laws of agents' behavior in international relations, whatever that agent might be. Moreover, although this may not be the case, it seems that if many of these contradictory notions were philosophically pursued until they were internally coherent, and coherent with each other, they would result in something like the characterization that Johnson produced in his analysis of the sophistic roots of realism.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, at least, many philosophers tend to associate realism with Thrasymachus' position from the Republic. Johnson's position, that political realism is modern politics' version of sophistry, can be succinctly presented as the following:<sup>24</sup>

- There is no justice except as the interest of the stronger rationalized to be so (and then to 'justify' their use of power); Self-interest is the only 'real' value.
- Human nature is has a strong evil, as self-interested or not 'other-regarding,' regardless of context, tendency
- "Truth" and "Justice" are relative to the speaker, truth and justice are, in reality, merely a function of the self-interest (the only real value, according to the first point) of the speaker

In conclusion, the strength of the traditional reading of Morgenthau (whether one is for or against it), is that the theory of human nature is completely coherent with the ethical methodology and other prescriptive and descriptive claims about international relations that the traditionalists make. Morgenthau, importantly, stresses the relevance of an understanding of human nature to understanding any social science. Obviously, therefore, a Morgenthau-inspired theory of human nature is essential to ground the legitimacy of any reinterpretation of Morgenthau. This theoretical coherence of the traditional reading is one strong reason why it has stuck around for so long. Another reason the traditional reading has gained such acceptance is Morgenthau's own ambiguity in his writings. Although he repeatedly denied that the above-described position was his, his vocabulary and style of

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<sup>23</sup> Johnson, 194-197. However, some of the further claims share much with Johnson's claim. In all, Johnson's identification of realism with sophism is probably the most profound effort to excavate realism's philosophical heritage in the traditionalist lens. It is a really impressive endeavor and does an excellent job of showing how the traditional interpretation derives from sophist philosophy.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, 204-205; cf. Johnson, 205, 208, 210.

writing definitely obscured possible alternatives; especially when Morgenthau deliberately and methodologically hid his Nietzschean philosophical basis. The way in which Morgenthau wrote *Politics among Nations* lends itself to this traditional interpretation when it is considered uncritically (i.e. without reference to Morgenthau's other works) and when it is read anachronistically (i.e. understood through a relational reference to neo-realism – its supposed theoretical heir). Moreover, these problems were compounded by the reductive nature of international relations (to reduce points to digestible bullets). In the end, Morgenthau did not do a very good job of clearing his own name even though he did put forth such an effort.

The traditional reading, even if it has been critiqued by the reinterpretation, will rest upon some first order principles that overrule, in a sense, the relevance of the criticism levied by the reinterpretation. As long as Morgenthau's human and state agents are still egoistic rational-choice actors or power-hungry actors, it does not matter whether politics is inherently tragic or whether realism should be about limits – if this assumption of human nature is accepted or, at minimum, not refuted then there is an ontological factor that will overrule lessons about limits and tragedy; Reality is still static in this regard, and prudent decision-makers will have to abide by the traditional interpretations. As long as Morgenthau's realism is an attempt at a "science" of politics, then the problems of limits and tragedy do not affect how the science of politics operates. This is to say that, as long as the type of human nature the traditional reading of Morgenthau proposes still stands theoretically, any attempts at reinterpretation will falter because the basic nature of international relations is still confined to rational self-interested or power-hungry actors, actors who do not care about limits, tragedy, flaws in positivism, or morality.

## **1.2 Moving Beyond the Traditional Interpretation**

In the last decade, the tide has begun to turn against the traditional interpretation, however, and a lot has been written demonstrating how some of the above claims about Morgenthau and realism are at best controversial. While many of them have been restricted to single aspects of Morgenthau or his political realism, there have also been a few comprehensive



reinterpretations. However, as has been mentioned, something the contemporary reinterpretations seem to lack is an in-depth, systematic philosophical analysis of Morgenthau's theory of human nature. Following Morgenthau's cues, as long as these reinterpretations lack a comprehensive human nature to stand on, they will suffer this deficiency when it comes to politics and action. That is, the reinterpretations will lack some coherence from the nature of the agent to the nature of political action and political morality. In fact, comparison will show that there is still a good degree of discrepancy among claims on these very issues – this incoherence seems to stem, in part, from the obscurity of Morgenthau's theory of human nature. This is not to say that the reinterpretations are wrong, but the most fundamental grounding for their claims is still underdeveloped. If agents actually are like the traditional understanding, and politics is actually scientific, then the reinterpretations do not fundamentally change anything about how realism operates when considered within Morgenthau's works. What this shortcoming points to is a fundamental contradiction in Morgenthau between his theory of human nature and what the reinterpretations claim, which seems to make him less viable as a thinker and perhaps it is worthwhile to move beyond him. This answer is unsatisfactory, however. There is a theory of human nature that can be made coherent with Morgenthau, and seeds of it are present in some of these reinterpretations. What remains to be done is the systematic analysis and demonstrating its relation to the rest of Morgenthau's realism. First, however, the reinterpretations.

An important first step in reinterpreting Morgenthau came about in Christoph Frei's intellectual biography on Morgenthau. The basic point of this work is to reveal the depth to which Morgenthau was affected by Nietzsche. Frei goes to great lengths to show that Morgenthau was most fundamentally a Nietzschean, against other interpretations (e.g. Hobbesian, Machiavellian, or Schmittian).<sup>25</sup> As a student, Morgenthau would spend around three and a half years reading the complete works of Nietzsche, and although he would eventually distinguish himself, the role Nietzsche played in his philosophical development

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<sup>25</sup> Frei, Christoph. *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 94-96, 98-113.

would be subtly acknowledge throughout his life.<sup>26</sup> This work is groundbreaking in that it opens Pandora's Box, in effect. It does not go to great lengths to establish the theoretical linkages between Morgenthau's writings and Nietzschean philosophy (e.g. how *Politics among Nations* should be read as a Nietzschean text instead of how it is now), but it does show the persistence of Nietzsche in the background of Morgenthau's thought. In addition, Frei is also able to link in the relevance of some Nietzschean-derivative scholars, such as the Frankfurt School (in particular, Hugo Sinzheimer, Paul Tillich, and Franz Neumann), Reinhold Niebuhr, and Max Weber, as well as distancing Morgenthau from a commonly assumed affiliation with Schmitt.<sup>27</sup> Morgenthau while recognize through Nietzsche's critique the shortcomings of the liberal rule of law in terms of politics, would not follow Schmitt into a flat rejection of it, but rather a critique to try to save it.<sup>28</sup> An important corollary concept adopted by Morgenthau is the value of political interaction to the self-constitution of individuals, an idea that is comparable to the writings of Hegel, Schmitt, and Arendt.<sup>29</sup>

Frei does make some explicit links to Morgenthau's broader philosophical background through his German writings (indirectly, though Nietzsche as well). He shows that Morgenthau was in fact concerned with the divide between facts and values, that reality poses problems for the realization of values but that facts were not entirely antithetical to values (from Weber to some extent, who gets it from Nietzsche).<sup>30</sup> He shows that Morgenthau derived his own critique of the limits of science and objectivity from Nietzsche's similar critique.<sup>31</sup> Morgenthau extends this Nietzschean limited objectivity to international relations and draws a simple conclusion – the limits of objectivity and certitude in terms of values point to an impasse in international relations: although two nations may both believe they are following the dictates of morality, their limited

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<sup>26</sup> Frei, 98-113. Hans Morgenthau was explicit that Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* was among the most important works for his formation (Frei, 99).

<sup>27</sup> Frei, 158-163.

<sup>28</sup> Frei, 157, 196-198.

<sup>29</sup> Frei, 125-127, 166, 172.

<sup>30</sup> Frei, 166, 175-177.

<sup>31</sup> Frei, 185-194.

perspectives can lead them into conflict over moral dilemmas.<sup>32</sup> He points to Nietzsche's critique of Enlightenment human nature as the basis for Morgenthau's similar critique – both would seek a psychologically/sociologically rich human nature, one which values (forms values) and is guided by those.<sup>33</sup> However, and importantly, Frei shows that Morgenthau draws a line with his embrace of Nietzsche: Morgenthau does not completely abandon normativity despite its fragility and advocate an elitist sense of morality as Nietzsche does.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Frei draws links between Morgenthau's legal perspective and his political perspective, showing that the two are not unrelated – in fact, what politics deals with the failure of normativity to regulate human behavior.<sup>35</sup> Both Morgenthau's political theory and his legal theory are Nietzschean at heart in Frei's reading.

However, despite demonstrating strong links between Morgenthau and a lot of philosophy not commonly associated with Morgenthau, Frei does not manage to show how exactly these indisputable linkages affect political realism. Moreover, despite pointing to how Morgenthau adopts Nietzschean notions, such as a rich human nature, Frei's presentation of Morgenthau's explicit human nature remains couched in the traditional reading – thus oriented around the *animus dominandi* (or *der Impuls des Lebens*).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, although Frei shows that Morgenthau made many of the above points, it is not altogether clear how this is present in Morgenthau's realism and how this reading relates to the traditional, non-Nietzschean reading of Morgenthau. Because of this, the burden falls upon subsequent scholars to link Nietzschean philosophy and concepts into Morgenthau's writings and broader realist project. Regardless, this was really a groundbreaking text for understanding Morgenthau and the roots of political realism and opened up many new questions by revealing just how poorly Morgenthau had been misunderstood.

A relatively earlier English language reevaluation is Bain's article *Deconfusing Morgenthau*. Authors, such as Jim George, had long been straw-manning Morgenthau with

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<sup>32</sup> Frei, 141-144;

<sup>33</sup> Frei, 104-105, 120, 146, 166, 180.

<sup>34</sup> Frei, 107.

<sup>35</sup> Frei, 133

<sup>36</sup> Frei, 126-131, 199.

accusations of positivism – that is, assumptions that Morgenthau’s political realism proposes that “the problems of international politics amount to little more than scientific problems: these problems (the foremost being war) cannot be treated as mere technical problems awaiting ‘solutions’ which follow the increase of theoretical knowledge.”<sup>37</sup> Such an assumption means realist claims have a sense of objectivity, such as the Hobbesian ‘amoral’ claim. The conclusion that this allows is that, like it or not, realism is indisputable. Developments in philosophy, however, have led to the rejection of the notion of objectivity in the social sciences – because this flies in the face of everything known about history, language, culture, and interpretation: all of those fuzzy but necessary variables of social science.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, realism lacks the capacity to investigate even this possibility (the limits of realism).<sup>39</sup> In the end, the point is that the possibility of objective knowledge has become questionable across the board, and this conclusion threatens the entire realist cannon, or so it would seem.

What Bain shows to the contrary is that these supposedly post-modernist developments in the philosophy of social science are actually not so new. In fact, Morgenthau was fully aware of these issues, owing in part to his study of Weber, and incorporated the conceptual limits of objective knowledge in the social sciences somehow into his own political realist project.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, an awareness of the limits of knowledge in the social sciences did not lead Morgenthau to reject political realism (as it does authors like George, who presume realism to be a positivistic theory) but instead led to the construction of political realism itself. Morgenthau’s concern was more or less George’s, and that was positivism, or science, that had lost the capacity to reflect on its own purpose and had become

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<sup>37</sup> Bain, William. “Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered.” *Review of International Studies*. (2000, 26), 451.

<sup>38</sup> Bain, 447-449.

<sup>39</sup> Bain, 450.

<sup>40</sup> Bain, 457-458. Other studies have come to support this idea following Bain’s article; cf. Gismondi, Mark. “Tragedy, Realism, and Postmodernity: *Kulturpessimismus* in the Theories of Max Weber, E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger.” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. (2004, 15.3), 455; Molloy, 74, 79, 82, 1099; Rengger, 757, 1099; Murray, 94; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 102, 113-115, 117; Scheuerman, William. “Realism and the Left: The Case of Hans J. Morgenthau.” *Review of International Studies*. (2008, 34), 30; Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 31-32, 22, 308, 345-346, 367, 380-382; Shilliam, Robert. “Morgenthau in Context: German Backwardness, German Intellectuals, and the Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project.” *European Journal of International Relations*. (2007, 13.3), 308, 317.

ideologically uncritical.<sup>41</sup> Morgenthau's realism was an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of an instrumentally rationalized political science by restoring consideration of value rationality to the forefront of political discussion through the device of the national interest.<sup>42</sup>

Although Bain does not explicitly link his clarification of Morgenthau into Nietzsche, the parallel between Bain's positive defense of Morgenthau and Nietzschean epistemology (e.g. perspectivalism, critique of reason, and critique of positivism) is apparent enough – which serves Bain's point of linking Morgenthau into George's own attack on (what he thinks is) Morgenthau fine.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, this is because Bain's article predates the English version of Frei's book, therefore Bain is confirmed by his coherence with Frei's independent conclusion on his points. Bain also draws attention to Morgenthau having a moral theory at work in his realism that extends far beyond the simple consequentialist reasoning restricted to the national interest (as a sort of instrumental rationality) or simple utilitarian calculations.<sup>44</sup>

Bain's investigation legitimately called into question many of the typical associations of Morgenthau and positivism, and there are broader implications as well (once questions of value and instrumentality are raised, they permeate the field). If the possibility of objectivity and value are invalid for political knowledge, they carry over into the realm of what individual actors are capable – what should we make of those “objective laws of human nature” that led George to his mistaken conclusion then? It also raises issues of what appropriate moral action would be in international relations if Morgenthau is attempting to avoid instrumentalization of politics. Moreover, acknowledging the importance of value in social science raises further issues about how to relate Morgenthau's rejection of positivism into his broader realist project.

Michael C. Williams would expand upon this and answer some of the above, as part of a more systematic approach to understanding what Morgenthau was saying. Williams frames

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<sup>41</sup> Bain, 452, 457, 458.

<sup>42</sup> Bain, 460, 462.

<sup>43</sup> Gismondi's later article makes similar points to those of Bain, but analyzes them with regard to Nietzschean philosophy. Gismondi, 453-454.

<sup>44</sup> Bain, 461.

this around the intent of Morgenthau's realism to address the limits of reason in understanding international affairs (interestingly, this makes Morgenthau significantly more metaphysically Kantian than many realize).<sup>45</sup> In particular, what Williams draws out is the same point that Bain has made: unlike the typical association of Morgenthau with an objective science of politics, Morgenthau's critique of reason is specifically so as to limit the possibility of having a science of politics because of the limited applicability of reason to the social.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Williams shows how this contributes to a constructivist, rather than objectivist understanding of social reality in Morgenthau's realism.<sup>47</sup> Finally, this notion of limits contributes to a reinterpretation of the role of power in politics – when one acknowledges the limits of both reason and knowledge and the construction of values, power becomes something to be reflexively moderated (or limited), rather than relentless pursued as is often thought by readers of Morgenthau and realism writ large.<sup>48</sup>

In Williams' analysis, Morgenthau's primary interest is in critiquing the rise of rationalism and empiricism in politics, which contribute to making politics into a science along the model of the natural sciences – which is to say a phenomenon (or category of phenomena) that can be studied to derive rational laws of behavior grounded in the being of that particular phenomenon. Williams shows that Morgenthau's fundamental critique of the power of reason manifests itself in several different ways: the role of reason in a human being (humans are not reducible to the instrumentally rational pursuit of material interests);<sup>49</sup> the role of reason in politics (political study does not yield methodological certainty of political action; political knowledge and scientific knowledge are categorically distinct);<sup>50</sup> the role of reason in ethics (ethics is not a matter of maximizing the possibility to pursue material interests as in some utilitarianism);<sup>51</sup> the role of reason in epistemology

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<sup>45</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 5. As in Kant, a critique of reason should not be confused with a rejection of reason altogether. Thus, Williams' reading of Morgenthau is not intended to show that he rejected reason in politics altogether but that he wanted to draw a line to what reason could accomplish in politics (a good deal) and where it would come up short.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 101.

<sup>47</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 5-6.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95, 110, 123, 183.

<sup>50</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 99-101.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95.

(there are no transcendent standards by which to assess values);<sup>52</sup> and the role of reason in assessing power (in politics, the most rational course of action is not necessarily the unlimited accumulation of power).<sup>53</sup> The result is a Morgenthau who is actually making sophisticated arguments against the rationalistic/scientistic Morgenthau that everyone thought they knew – Williams’ reinterpreted Morgenthau undermines the typical understanding of Morgenthau. Moreover, Morgenthau makes a genealogy of this form of rationalism, attributing it to the victory of the middle-classes (and their interests in rational-stability) over the aristocracy.<sup>54</sup> Thus, consistent with Morgenthau’s critique of values and rational certainty, this type of rational certainty is an ideology of the middle-classes, not an objective truth.

In the place of this rationalism without respect for its limits, Williams shows that Morgenthau does not seek to discard liberalism altogether, another common misconception, but to replace a dysfunctional liberalism (dysfunctional because of its poor foundations) with a healthier liberalism that is better able to stand up to the challenges of its times, challenges represented by the anti-liberal exceptionalism of Schmitt, the ultra-rationalism of fascist ideology, and the similar ultra-rationalism of communism – all of which showed themselves to be totally in line with the rational certitude of this dysfunctional liberalism, and capable of taking the power of science and their uncritical values to horrible extremes.<sup>55</sup> There are two solutions it seems, a romanticism that would seek to eliminate science and reason in a retreat to the past and an attempt to compensate for, or balance against, the rational certitude that modernity has inspired without discarding modernity altogether. Morgenthau opts for the latter and embraces a strategy of limits exemplified by Weber’s Ethics of Responsibility (in which, “rationalization can easily become the antithesis of responsibility”).<sup>56</sup> Thus, all knowledge and all values must be qualified and Williams arrives to a realist politics that reflexively understands itself to be lacking in knowledge necessary to commit to any plan without any regard to possibility of failure or

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<sup>52</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 102, 113-115, 117.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 107.

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 97-98, 123.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 94, 102-103, 104, 121-122, 171.

<sup>56</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 125, 175-176. Quotation from 194.

being wrong.<sup>57</sup> The idea is that this rationally induced incertitude will result in a political ethical methodology that is a limited consequentialism – that is, uncertainty makes one very careful in how one can justify the consequences of one's actions.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the accumulation of power and the pursuit of the national interest, while still the values advocated by Williams' Morgenthau, the extent to which they can be pursued are severely qualified by any rational decision-maker. Moreover, this uncertainty should promote a healthier liberalism by giving liberalism the power to understand its own limits and understand itself through value construction vis-à-vis discussion of the national interest<sup>59</sup> – which paradoxically provides a richer liberal atmosphere by creating the potential for greater tolerance of liberals for others.<sup>60</sup>

Williams' treatment goes to amazing lengths to show some essential aspects of Morgenthau that are, rationally, nearly undeniable, but at the same time often denied or missed. Although Williams does reveal some crucial aspects of Morgenthau's theory, in particular his concern for limits in politics (or, perhaps better, moderation) through a critique of scientism or unlimited rationalism, there are some fundamental aspects, equally important for a comprehensive reading of Morgenthau, absent. While Williams does an amazing job of extricating Morgenthau's negative approach to human nature (the rejection of rational certitude and objective knowledge and the non-exclusively material orientation of human nature), there is still a good deal of ambiguity about what a positive sense of his human nature might be and how whatever this is would be reconcilable with the negative side. In addition, the relationship of a positive conception of human nature, presented alongside Williams' explication of the consequences of Morgenthau's negative human nature, would add a lot to Morgenthau's political realism. Williams also does little in the way of integrating the discussion of tragedy into his analysis of Morgenthau, which is a shame because his reading of Morgenthau can definitely have an impact on the current discussion of tragedy and international relations, not to mention Morgenthau's own treatment of the topic. Finally, while it is clear how Morgenthau arrives to his ethical methodology (a

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<sup>57</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 98-99.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 172, 176.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 169-170, 188.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 119, 121, 166, 178.



consequentialism limited by epistemic uncertainty and its corresponding liberal, democratic deliberation on values), the way in which this ethical method works to regulate human behavior could be clarified further, especially by linking it into other similar analysis of ethics/metaethics. Moreover, there is some conceptual disagreement over Morgenthau's ethical methodology between Williams and Lebow that should be resolved.

Several authors all seem to be following the above trends and introducing their own unique insights with regard to realist human nature and morality. That is they are moving away from the typical understanding of Morgenthau's human nature – a sort of rational choice actor, *homo economicus*, or some sort of evil monster driven by the *animus dominandi* (or some combination thereof).

Against the above-discussed rationalist assumptions of the typical understanding of Morgenthau's realism, there have been several additional negative movements. Molloy, Jervis, Gismondi, Rengger, and Scheuerman follow Williams and Bain in discussing that realist agents, in whatever environment, do not correspond to the rational choice/rationally self-interested actors that they are often portrayed as.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, for Molloy, interest is open-ended, so even if agents were purely rational-choice oriented (or instrumentally rational), there would still be an incredible indeterminacy in agential motivation and behavior – enough indeterminacy to render rational choice theory useless for political analysis.<sup>62</sup> Scheuerman furthers this broadening of human nature away from a rationalistic monism through a positive construction. Scheuerman points toward Morgenthau's use of psychology as a better basis to understand realist human nature; Morgenthau's psychology was drawn from Freud (who adapted it, in turn, from Plato), which is to say the presence of bio-psychological motivations that are reducible to rational accounts.<sup>63</sup>

And with the traditional account of monistic human nature determined through the *animus dominandi*, there have also been several negative developments showing that this is not what everyone has thought it was. Although there is still much to be said about exactly

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<sup>61</sup> Molloy, 83; Jervis, 7, 10, 1099; Gismondi, 455; Rengger, 757; Scheuerman, 22.

<sup>62</sup> Molloy, 82.

<sup>63</sup> Scheuerman, 24, 26. Molloy alludes to this as well, see Molloy, Sean. "Truth, Power, Theory: Hans Morgenthau's Formulation of Realism." *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. (2004, 15), 20.

what the animus is, how it relates to other aspects of Morgenthau's theory of human nature, and how great or how dominating a role it plays in human nature, Molloy and Murray have been cognizant of the fact that Morgenthau is very careful to state that besides the animus dominandi there is also an important moral aspect of human nature.<sup>64</sup> Molloy even notes that, for Morgenthau, human moral nature balances against its animus dominandi.<sup>65</sup> That is, beside the desire to dominate others stands the desire to do what is just or right. Moreover, Murray has shown that Morgenthau allotted an important role to what effect universal notions of morality had on human behavior and action: humans cannot act without reference, as at minimum a rationalization, to some universalized, formal moral notions.<sup>66</sup> All of this is substantiated through multiple textual accounts. Obviously, this has grave implications for any interpretation of Morgenthau that posits Morgenthau, or his realism, as an amoral. That the traditional interpretation has managed to maintain an amoral reading for so long, despite Morgenthau's own affirmations of the fundamentality of morality to his realism is puzzling, but it is refreshing that authors are now fighting against this trend, and attempting to account for what a relevant moral aspect to human nature would mean for political realism.

Lebow's well-known book also acknowledges the gravity of Morgenthau's critique of rationalism and the rise of scientism in the social sciences that is marginalizing or undermining philosophy and other non-scientific, qualitative epistemologies.<sup>67</sup> As before, this corresponds to a problem of the limits of reason that scientism has missed: objective knowledge, and scientific knowledge, cannot legitimately explain everything that is worth knowing.<sup>68</sup> Lebow incorporates Nietzsche here, and shows how Nietzsche was responsible for Morgenthau's critique of objectivity and Enlightenment 'rationalism' through perspectivalism and the limits of reason.<sup>69</sup> This reading of Morgenthau is entirely consistent with the above readings.

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<sup>64</sup> Molloy, 82, 83; Murray, 93.

<sup>65</sup> Molloy, "Truth, Power, Theory," 23.

<sup>66</sup> Murray, 85.

<sup>67</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 31-32, 22, 308, 345-346, 367, 380-382.

<sup>68</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 60, 385.

<sup>69</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 383.

What makes Lebow's contribution particularly interesting is how he incorporates Morgenthau's use of tragedy into this analysis. Lebow's reading of Morgenthau shows that tragedy was the vital device for Morgenthau with which to moderate scientism.<sup>70</sup> That is, scientism encouraged certitude of its prescriptions (e.g. political science leads to the belief that, by following axioms that are scientifically established, one can achieve what one wills). In other words, an unqualifiedly "scientific" outlook on the world was hubristic – it led its proponents to believe they had the control and power to achieve whatever they willed (usually justice, even) without any regard to self-criticism.<sup>71</sup> Tragedy, as a narrative art form, shows decision-makers and political leaders that virtue, knowledge, and power are not absolute guarantees, and that the unknown, irrational, and uncertain has not been banished from the world of man.<sup>72</sup> Tragedy teaches the lesson of a secular theodicy. Ideally, study of tragedy leads to enlightened self-limitation. The persistence of uncertainty and the uncontrollable, once recognized through tragic education, should lead one to qualify<sup>73</sup> science and reason with the virtue of *sophrosune* or self-moderation (usually through self-knowledge).<sup>74</sup> This obviously implies something similar to the critical knowledge that comes to us through Kant. In the end, the hope is that by studying tragedy, the limits of reason should create a more moral political environment by encouraging restraint and limits against the *hubris* that scientism has promoted since its rise as the dominant epistemology.

Finally, Lebow makes an interesting claim about Morgenthau. Contrary to almost every reading of Morgenthau to date, Lebow concludes that Morgenthau is not a consequentialist, of any sort. He supports this claim by appealing to his critique of epistemology and science. For Morgenthau, consequentialism cannot work because "we can never know the longer term consequences of our actions. The claim that the end justifies the means is nothing more than an attempt to escape moral responsibility...Pace Kant, Morgenthau clearly

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<sup>70</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 308, 363-364.

<sup>71</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 49, 365.

<sup>72</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 364.

<sup>73</sup> Importantly, qualify does not mean to reject – Lebow (nor any of these authors) are not endorsing an irrationalist or anti-scientist "romanticism."

<sup>74</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 308, 366.

subscribes to a deontological view of ethics, although he nowhere makes this explicit.”<sup>75</sup> This claim is compelling because Lebow integrates the critique of rationality naturally into the foundational claims of consequentialism. It seems difficult to deny that Morgenthau could not have been a simple consequentialist once this point is made. However, Lebow’s conclusion (that Morgenthau was a deontologist) does not follow as easily. It rests strictly on a negative reading, which seems to rest on shaky foundations even in Lebow’s eyes. A page later, Lebow says for Morgenthau, although it is realistic to be self-bound by moral side constraints (i.e. a deontological morality), “it is naïve and dangerous to believe that morality, expressed through law and international institutions can consistently restrain the pursuit of relative advantage.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, deontology is right *and* realistic, but only when qualified to some extent. Exactly how this realization of the shortcomings of deontological method affect Morgenthau’s realism is unclear. Moreover, this qualified deontology needs to be compared to another claim: the qualified consequentialism proposed by Williams and with Lebow’s own appeals to virtue ethics (*phronesis*) within the text as a realist value.

In addition, Lebow presents Morgenthau’s tragedy as an educative device, to teach through narrative the limits of reason, science, and man’s control over the world and his fellows. However, this is not exactly what Morgenthau seemed to mean by tragedy. In a well-known letter to Michael Oakeshott, Morgenthau stated clearly that “the tragic is a quality of existence, not a creation of art.”<sup>77</sup> This needs to be reconciled with what Lebow claims, because at least initially it seems that Morgenthau would not limit himself to merely claiming tragedy is a useful device. Moreover, if Morgenthau is as Nietzsche as Lebow and Frei suggest, Morgenthau’s reading of tragedy should be read through Nietzsche’s own famous *The Birth of Tragedy*, which does not receive much attention in Lebow’s book. Morgenthau’s writings to Oakeshott seem to square well with Nietzsche’s own infamous thesis from that book, “we are merely images and artistic projections for the true author, and that we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art – for it is only as an

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<sup>75</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 237.

<sup>76</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 238.

<sup>77</sup> Morgenthau, letter to Oakeshott 22 May 1948. Hans J. Morgenthau Papers. Box B44.

aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified.”<sup>78</sup> This is to say aesthetic phenomena are the most justifiable explanations of being, in this case, for Nietzsche as for Morgenthau, the most appropriate aesthetic form for society seems to be tragedy. Finally, Lebow’s appeal to *sophrosune* should be investigated further. While the claim seems right: that Morgenthau had this notion in the back of his mind and it was an important virtue for political leaders and decisions-makers to develop, Lebow’s evidence for it is confusing. Lebow understands *Urteilskraft* and prudence, in Morgenthau’s respective German and English vernacular, as self-control or *sophrosune*.<sup>79</sup> However, *phronesis*, not *sophrosune*, usually is translated as judgment or prudence. In addition, ‘*Urteilskraft*’ must be translated as judgment, not self-control. Importantly, however, *sophrosune* is conceptually and etymologically linked to *phronesis*: *sophrosune* preserves *phronesis* against corruption (and *akrasia*).<sup>80</sup> Therefore, while Morgenthau’s vernacular does not immediately point to *sophrosune*, it cannot be divorced from *sophrosune* either. What this suggests is that a broader treatment of virtue ethics, beginning with the political virtue *phronesis*, is necessary to understand fully Morgenthau’s ethical method.

Koskenniemi’s book on international law provides a unique treatment of Morgenthau in that it is centered on his early work and this work is predominantly oriented toward legal studies. It demonstrates several similar claims to the above analyses of the later (American) Morgenthau, as well as several original, well-substantiated points that have not been repeated or fully extricated yet. Some of these deal with the epistemic uncertainty that functions as a critique of rationalism/scientism in law and politics. Its relation in law arises from the necessarily perspectival character of states and judges with regard to compliance and sanctioning of international legal norms – self-interest and identity come to pervade a legal system at compromising levels when it is sufficiently decentralized (in Kelsen’s sense, where enforcement comes from law’s component agents, rather than a sovereign

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<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 52. Cf. pp. 22, 31-32, 52, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 308.

<sup>80</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terrence Irwin (Indianapolis; Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), 6.44 (p. 155)

executive) and characterized by value pluralism.<sup>81</sup> Perspectivalism, moreover, means that judging a particular case according to a formal legal statute is less mechanical than it seems. Moreover, extra-legal details, peripheral to the statute or code being applied to a situation, are bound to have relevant relations to the decision to be made. Thus, the law cannot be mechanically applied as many forms of positivism would have it.<sup>82</sup> Related to this, is Koskenniemi's insight that neo-realism does not share this with its typically-supposed father – while Morgenthau was strictly against any behavioralistic (or scientific) approach to politics and international relations, neo-realism, beginning with Waltz, adopted exactly the opposite approach and attempted to ground itself in science.<sup>83</sup> Morgenthau derived this 'unscientific' attitude from his work against legal formalism (positivism).<sup>84</sup>

The individual, perspectival nature of law, plus the inherently interested nature of all parties involved, means that the possibility of arriving to just reconciliation (or just decisions) is compromised to a significantly greater extent in international legal relations. Moreover, there is an important ideological aspect of Morgenthau that Koskenniemi manages to draw out quite well – the role that rationalization of self-interest, in terms of universalizable values, plays in justification and explanation of legal and political relations.<sup>85</sup> The (rather Schmittian) point is that, despite the liberal-bourgeoisie attempt to eliminate the irrational through the liberal rule of law, these irrational attitudes haven't gone away just because the rule of law positively delimits such "political" behavior outside its scope, they are still operating just at a disguised or rationalized level.<sup>86</sup> An important corollary is that the legal-normative assertion of equality among agents is countered by the factual inequality of agents in terms of capacity. Despite the appeal of the normative half of this, and attempt to conform to it, the power that inequality grants to the stronger does result in normative deviations that cannot be sanctioned by a legal system that assumes an abstract equality.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Koskenniemi, Martti. *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 438, 443, 441-442.

<sup>82</sup> Koskenniemi, 443, 467-468, 489. Cf. Koskenniemi, 429, 435,

<sup>83</sup> Koskenniemi, 472.

<sup>84</sup> Koskenniemi, 459, 468-469.

<sup>85</sup> Koskenniemi, 450-451.

<sup>86</sup> Koskenniemi, 453.

<sup>87</sup> Koskenniemi, 461.

And this can make them more dangerous because it means that the irrational is boxed into rational outlets, but the inherent agonism (in that Nietzschean sense) that they produce still plays an active role in society.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the positivist distinction between law and politics is not so neat – the two are, in fact, intertwined and neither has a definitive hierarchical priority over the other, even though the dominance of the liberal rule of law would be preferable.

Morgenthau's analysis of the flaws of international law, and by extension the liberal rule of law in general, derives from problems in the way in which normativity is typically understood to relate to reality, an issue understood today as the fact/value dichotomy. For Morgenthau, the role of norms in affecting empirical relations is psychological. That is, although norms lack empirical existence, they have a strong motivational power that works through human psychology.<sup>89</sup> The power of a norm is to motivate human action. The flip side of this is that, because norms, including the law, are abstract non-empirical and non-agential beings, their very existence depends upon some empirical executive.<sup>90</sup> This can either come through an agent acting in conformity with norms or an agent sanctioning the delict of another agent who has failed to conform to those norms. Norms are a psychological function, although "real" they lack empirical existence and depend upon some empirical when they fail to exercise psychological compulsion.<sup>91</sup> This is as true within a domestic legal framework as it is for international law. The relevance of human psychology to relations that are beyond the individual level, such as international relations is through Morgenthau's perspective on social action. Human nature, and human psychology as an aspect of that, is relevant for social forces, including the role of the state, because "Individuals are always the sole carriers of social forces," or non-empirical beings (e.g. 'the law' or 'society') do not affect empirical reality, but must work through empirical beings.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Koskenniemi, 449, 453.

<sup>89</sup> Koskenniemi, 455.

<sup>90</sup> Koskenniemi, 454-455, 456.

<sup>91</sup> Koskenniemi, 457-458.

<sup>92</sup> Koskenniemi, 448-449, 454, 467-468.

Koskenniemi manages to trace this persistence to a fundamental (but not monistic) role in human nature. Of course, this is the *animus dominandi* that all readers of Morgenthau are familiar with. However, rather than simplistically reducing human nature to this one drive, he sets it properly within Morgenthau's explicit Freudian framework.<sup>93</sup> That is, human nature for Morgenthau is not one simple drive, satisfied by instrumentally rational decision-making, but is series of non-hierarchical psychological and biological drives that are not equally manifest among individuals.<sup>94</sup> The obvious irony that Koskenniemi and Scheuerman have pointed to with this psychologically rich human nature is that many of the critics of realism, such as Tickner and Freyberg-Inan, who attack realism for having a monistic rational-individualist or 'power-seeking' human nature *are not actually criticizing realism at all*.<sup>95</sup> *Such critics are merely reiterating Morgenthau's realist theory of human nature* – there is no disagreement between authors like Freyberg-Inan and Tickner with Morgenthau because these authors are merely attacking a Morgenthau straw man.

Koskenniemi also alludes to the role that the will, or act intentionality, has to play in Morgenthau's theory of human nature.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, both the non-hierarchical nature of drives and the role of the will leads to a motivational account of human action that cannot be rationalized, that cannot be erected into a theory of rational choice.<sup>97</sup> And these drives cannot be neatly harmonized either, although social norms do tend toward that. However, without proper outlets to channel those "irrational" drives, such as the desire for power (the *animus dominandi*), a society becomes destabilized as they build up in its individuals.<sup>98</sup>

However, Koskenniemi makes several analytical errors in his comparison of Morgenthau with Schmitt. He reads Morgenthau as reducibly Schmittian on several points: that the national interest is reducible to self-preservation against foes and that Morgenthau

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<sup>93</sup> Koskenniemi (448-449) refers here to Morgenthau's unpublished article, "Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen," 4-5. Morgenthau Stacks Source: HJM-B-151

<sup>94</sup> Koskenniemi, 444, 452.

<sup>95</sup> Tickner, 430-431, 432, 437; Freyberg-Inan, 4, 109.

<sup>96</sup> Koskenniemi, 456-458

<sup>97</sup> Koskenniemi, 449.

<sup>98</sup> Koskenniemi, 444, 449-451.



advocates a strong executive who is harmonious with a Rousseau-derived general will.<sup>99</sup> The national interest claim is undermined, even in Koskeniemi's own analysis, by the fact that the indeterminacy of the political makes any possible interest, be it moral, economic, geographical or anything else, parcel to the national interest.<sup>100</sup> Morgenthau's arguments were never in support of a strong executive (Schmitt's commissarial dictator), in fact he repeatedly laments and criticizes exactly this.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Morgenthau, as will be shown, rejects Rousseau abstractions such as the general will as "bad metaphysics" because there is no real 'general will,' but it is merely a conceptual short cut for a phenomenon that is actually an amalgamation of individual actions and wills.<sup>102</sup> Finally, Koskeniemi points to an "essential" distinction between the domestic and international order, when in fact Morgenthau's theory hinges exactly on their similarity (owing to the same human nature working at the root of both systems).<sup>103</sup> This analytic reduction limits the depth of Morgenthau's validity because it presents a political side of Morgenthau that never was. Morgenthau's un-Schmittian side needs to be reconciled with the rest of Koskeniemi's claims about Morgenthau – and it is within this rational core that reconciliation can begin. More importantly, Koskeniemi states that Morgenthau's realist project was the product of Hobbesian anthropology, among other factors.<sup>104</sup> This claim was not only refuted by Morgenthau himself in some articles, but also seems to be belied by Koskeniemi's own analysis of Morgenthau's sense of human nature earlier in his writing.<sup>105</sup> At points, Koskeniemi seems to be falling into the same trap that many of Morgenthau's detractors have fallen into, reading realism through a neo-realist lens, despite the evidence to the contrary.

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<sup>99</sup> Koskeniemi, 438, 440, respectively.

<sup>100</sup> Koskeniemi, 442; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11.

<sup>101</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 228-229, 390; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 30-35, 215-222, 435; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099; Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 266-292; Morgenthau, Hans J. "The Dilemmas of Freedom." *The American Political Science Review*. (1957, 51.3), 721-723.

<sup>102</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "The Evil of Power." *The Review of Metaphysics*. (1950, 12.3), 515. *Politics among Nations* 117-118; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 7-8.

<sup>103</sup> Koskeniemi 466; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3.

<sup>104</sup> Koskeniemi 467.

<sup>105</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "Another 'Great Debate: The National Interest of the United States.'" *The American Political Science Review*. (1952, 46.4), 983-989; Koskeniemi, 444, 445-452, 467.

In conclusion, Koskenniemi's addition to the Morgenthau reinterpretation literature is particularly valuable because it shows several unaddressed aspects of Morgenthau through his early, legal writings. However, the points he presents are in line with the reinterpretations made by the other authors of the later Morgenthau, in particular with regard to the Nietzsche points about values and the limits of reason. His legal focus shows another side of Morgenthau, and allows for a better understanding of how exactly human nature (a broader, psychologically rich human nature) contributes to both politics and normativity, and how politics and normativity are related to one another. But there is still more room to understand exactly how normativity and psychology contribute to human nature. Koskenniemi doesn't devote much analysis to this, nor to understanding how human nature, and drive sublimation, can be settled in international politics. Nor does he show how Morgenthau would reconcile the shortcomings of the liberal rule of law, given the faults that he draws out of it. Moreover, the critique of the liberal rule of law for the above reasons has obvious implications for deontological moral methodology, but it is not clear from this what moral system Morgenthau is a proponent of instead, and how this could be reconciled with the rich, irrational human nature that Koskenniemi points toward.

Shilliam's recent publication linking Morgenthau to Hegel and Weber (even if it is critical of Morgenthau...) does a great job in bringing to light one of the most important, and most missed, aspects of Morgenthau's theory of human nature – this is *bildung*, or the “real world constitution of individual” that contributes to shaping their nature.<sup>106</sup> *Bildung*, in the broadest sense, means that human beings are constituted by the world around them – in particular, by their historical, social, and cultural context.<sup>107</sup> Thus, Shilliam's claim is one concept necessary to understand Morgenthau's theory of human nature is that of society/culture and culturally derived values, and how these contribute to determining how an individual behaves. In other words, individuals' behavior are relevantly formed by their social situations and relationships. And the concept of *bildung* and its relationship with human nature is something that literature on Morgenthau has largely ignored outside of Shilliam's article.

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<sup>106</sup> Shilliam, 303-304.

<sup>107</sup> Shilliam, 303-304; Bain, 446.

Shilliam links Morgenthau's notion of the tragic into his attempt to defend liberalism against itself (in particular, first German liberalism then liberalism writ large in international relations).<sup>108</sup> That is, an attempt to fix the problem of liberalism's self-assured over-rationalization/scientization that resulted in limitless expansion without a means for any self-reflexive critique. To fix this, Morgenthau attempted to introduce moderation into policy through the tragic concept *hubris*.<sup>109</sup> This is to say that liberalism had to be protected by illiberal, "conservative" or aristocratic values.<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, this has serious implications for morality and foreign policy that could be discussed in greater depth.

Shilliam brings several unique contributions to the understanding of Morgenthau and shows how they are coherent with several other aspects of his underlying philosophy, such as perspectivalism, tragedy, and morality. Moreover, Shilliam links all of this into a philosophical genealogy of Morgenthau (namely, Hegel and Weber). However, although it does raise these often missed aspects of Morgenthau, it does lack a more analytical approach to what exactly his theory of human nature was, how this relates to his realist ethics (whatever those aristocratic values may be), what those missing genealogical links (e.g. Aristotle and Nietzsche) add to Shilliam's contributions, and how (or if) Shilliam's contributions relevantly affects the way in which political realism should be understood.

While the above reinterpretations contribute an incredible amount to understanding both Morgenthau and classical realism, as stated, they all lack an in-depth analysis of Morgenthau's human nature and how this contributes to understanding his political realism, even if there is agreement that it is limited and not what the typical interpretation presents it as. Moreover, at various points these reinterpretations seem to be at odds with one another over some points, such as what exactly Morgenthau's ethics was and how this comes about from the limited human nature everyone agree upon. Finally, as alluded to above, the connection between Morgenthau and his broader philosophical stance (aside from his genealogical roots) is still unclear at points. These are all issues that this dissertation will

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<sup>108</sup> Shilliam, 313.

<sup>109</sup> Shilliam, 300.

<sup>110</sup> Shilliam, 316.

attempt to resolve in order to provide a stronger Morgenthau that remains coherent at heart with the above work.

In his autobiographical fragments, he describes Nietzsche as the most significant early philosophical influence over him.<sup>111</sup> Frei's work shows how Nietzschean quotations and allusions pervade his writing. Beyond Nietzsche, there are strong indications that Aristotle was a significant figure for him (Mollov's opens his book with Morgenthau's self-avowed debt to Aristotle).<sup>112</sup> Morgenthau repeatedly appeals to classical Greek concepts, such as the mega thaumazein, and obviously also had an interest and a knowledge of Aristotelian theory.<sup>113</sup> There is no doubt, either, that other major philosophical figures were influential in Morgenthau's life and writings, with whom Morgenthau would be engaging; these include Plato,<sup>114</sup> Kant,<sup>115</sup> Hegel,<sup>116</sup> Marx,<sup>117</sup> Freud,<sup>118</sup> Weber,<sup>119</sup> Mannheim<sup>120</sup> Niebuhr,<sup>121</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., and Robert J. Myers. *Truth and Tragedy: A Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau with an Intellectual Biography by Hans J. Morgenthau*. (Washington: New Republic Book Co., 1977), 7; Frei 94-96, 98-113; Koskenniemi, 448-449.

<sup>112</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 5, 28, 154, 184, 193, 211, 220; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 7-8, 31-32, 73; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 7-10, 24; Mollov, M. Benjamin. *Power and Transcendence*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), vi; cf. Lang, *Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*, 1099.

<sup>113</sup> Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 241; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 7-8; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 24; Lang, *Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*, 1099.

<sup>114</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 5, 16, 28, 44, 184, 226; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 16-18; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 24, 38.

<sup>115</sup> Morgenthau, *Kann in unserer Zeit eine objective Moralordnung aufgestellt werden?*, 33-47; Morgenthau, Hans J. *La Réalité des Normes, en Particulier des Normes du Droit International; Fondements d'une Théorie des Normes*. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934). 1099; Morgenthau, Hans J. "Positivism mal compris et théorie réaliste du Droit international." *Colección de Estudios Históricos, Jurídicos, Pedagógicos y Literarios*. (Madrid: Unknown, 1936), 1099; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 15-16, 184, 199; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 61-67; Frei, 134, 166, 175, 184.

<sup>116</sup> Morgenthau, *Kann in unserer Zeit eine objective Moralordnung aufgestellt werden?*, 48-66; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 38.

<sup>117</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 4, 32-33, 57, 91, 143.

<sup>118</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen." Morgenthau Stacks Source: HJM-B-151; Although Morgenthau would later depart from Freud when he felt that Freud was too reductionist to properly understand the complexities of political experience (Cf. Koskenniemi, 449; Frei, 67, 126).

<sup>119</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 34-35; Frei, 95, 109-110, 113, 130, 223-224. Shilliam, 312-317. See also Morgenthau, "Fragment of an Intellectual Biography," 7.

<sup>120</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 34; Morgenthau, "Fragment of an Intellectual Biography," 14; Frei, 116-117, 150.

<sup>121</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, Dedication Page; Landon, Harold R. (Ed.). *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Prophetic Voice in Our Time*. (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1962), 1099. Tjalve, Vibeke Schoue. *American Jeremiahs: Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and the Realist Recovery of a Republican Peace*. (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 2005), 9-20; Frei, 111-112.

Kelsen,<sup>122</sup> Neumann,<sup>123</sup> Schmitt,<sup>124</sup> Frankfurt,<sup>125</sup> Tillich,<sup>126</sup> Jaspers,<sup>127</sup> Strauss,<sup>128</sup> and Arendt.<sup>129</sup>

However, this dissertation will focus on the two that, both in Morgenthau's writings and by Morgenthau's speech, seem to have been the most central. In other words, Morgenthau was like many of the German academics of the early twentieth century: he was somewhere in-between Nietzsche and Aristotle. Thus, the following reinterpretation of Morgenthau will focus on reading his explicit theory this lens and attempt to offer the methodological analysis that this lens provides of Morgenthau's explicit writings. This reading of Morgenthau with regard to his philosophical influences should address the issues pointed to above, the philosophical grounding still addressed only in part by much of the secondary literature.

## 2.0 General Thesis Statement and Outline

*The intention of this thesis is to investigate the philosophical foundations of Hans Morgenthau's project of political realism. It argues that the intention spanning Morgenthau's writings on political realism, as a response to scientism, is to critique this*

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<sup>122</sup> Morgenthau, *La Réalité des Normes*, 1099. Frei, 134-137, 150-153; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 293-327; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, Dedication Page. Cf. J Jütersonke, Oliver. "The Image of Law in Politics among Nations." In *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*. Williams, Michael C. (Ed.). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 94, 102-107.

<sup>123</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "Implied Limitations on Regulatory Powers in Administration Law." *The University of Chicago Law Review*. (1944, 11.2); Morgenthau, Hans J. "Implied Regulatory Powers in Administration Law." *Iowa Law Review*. (1943, 28.4); Morgenthau, Hans J. "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law." *The American Journal of International Law*. (1940, 34.2); "The Dilemmas of Freedom."; Frei, 38.

<sup>124</sup> Frei 160-162; Scheuerman, 30; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 102-104; Koskeniemi, 438. Morgenthau would eventually conclude that "[Schmitt was] the most evil man alive" (Frei, 160).

<sup>125</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, v; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 43, 43-51; Frei, 38-39;

<sup>126</sup> Landon, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 1099; Frei, 38-39, 169.

<sup>127</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 122-123, 152-153. Young-Bruehl, Email Correspondence 17/07/2007.

<sup>128</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Preface 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition; Frei, 173-174.

<sup>129</sup> Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, Preface; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 2-6, 36-45, 52-60, 146; PaP, 197-242; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 374; Morgenthau, Hans J. "Hannah Arendt 1906-1975." *Political Theory*. (1976, 4.1); Frei, 113; Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Hannah Arendt, for Love of the World*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), xiv-xv, 349-358, 383, 387, 424-425, 453-454; Lang, *Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*.

*approach and present a viable “unscientific” alternative. More narrowly, his intention is to critique the possibility of a making politics into an empirical science. This critique of political “science,” rests on a denial of the possibility of scientistic understandings of human nature and ethical methodology (i.e. normative political action), which are the necessary basis for any theory of politics. To complement this critique of scientism, this thesis will outline and discuss Morgenthau’s positive contribution to politics: his realism is an ‘unscientific’ approach to politics. To do this, this thesis will present Morgenthau’s positive account of human nature and ethical methodology – which will produce a better picture of what an unscientific theory of politics constitutes. Finally, the relationship between unscientific politics and tragedy will be discussed, as these two concepts are intimately related.*

An important distinction needs to be made at the outset. Reason, rationality, and science are not the same thing. It is a typical fallacy of the secular age to assimilate them, however. It is not one that Morgenthau is unaware of either: he famously states that reason should be used to understand politics, but politics is not a model of reason.<sup>130</sup> This claim can seem ambiguous or even contradictory. What it means is that, *although rationality can be used to understand and make intelligible politics, politics is not itself rational*. His work in *Politics among Nations* supports this notion when he discusses the unquantifiability and often ambiguous and unknowable condition of power, the unifying concept of politics.<sup>131</sup> What science means here, unless qualified otherwise, is a very specific epistemological device corresponding to scientific method – that is, science here refers to the most legitimate epistemological method of the secular age. Scientific method, as a “deductive nomological conception of explanation,”<sup>132</sup> produces axioms that have three distinct but interrelated properties:<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*,

<sup>132</sup> Green, Donald P. and Ian Shapiro. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Application in Political Science*. (London: Yale University Press, 1994), 30; Elster, Jon. “When Rationality Fails.” (in Cook, and Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*), 24.

<sup>133</sup> All three properties defining scientific method are taken from Elster’s definition. Elster, “When Rationality Fails,” 24.

1. Formalization: the properties of a class of an object or phenomenon are valid universally and it can be described in an abstract, or general, way; for example, the properties of an atom are the same regardless of when and where it is and are universal across all those atoms of the same type
2. Causality: the phenomenon being described by scientific method can be understood in terms of clear causal descriptions; the relationships between all causes and effects, in a particular series, are attributable and knowable.
3. Repeatability, or *ceteris paribus*:<sup>134</sup> the formal causal relationship can be repeated, all things being equal.

Science, through this method, can arrive to certain true and eternal properties of objects or phenomenal relationships between objects, which allow both for predictability but also control over them. In other words, science uncovers necessary and unchanging properties of its objects. This means that scientific epistemology rests upon not only empirical observation and analysis of its objects. Moreover, this understanding is understood to be “value-free,” which is to say that an observer can study and understand an object without their personal biases interfering with the outcome of the study – science will have the same outcome regardless of the scientist. The power of scientific method as an epistemological device rests exactly in this formal, causally explainable repeatability, which allows for science to make strong and compelling truth-claims about reality. This value-free scientific approach has two important implications: science is methodologically and epistemologically superior to any other method of knowledge because of its universal and objective nature, which is the product of the disinterested capacities of reason in understanding its objects.

Morgenthau’s claim against making a science of politics means that it fails along some or all of the above conditions of scientific method. Moreover, the roots of this seem to rest in his claims about human nature and ethical method – that is, neither human nature nor ethics can be made into a science, and therefore politics, standing upon these and especially upon human nature, cannot be a science either. This does not, however, mean that human nature

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<sup>134</sup> Dupré, 10.

and ethics can be described rationally. To help further this distinction, an appeal to Franz Neumann, may be useful.

Human behavior can be rational or irrational. We speak of a rational behaviour, but we do not mean by this a *rationalistic* one.

The noun corresponding to the adjective “rational” is “rationality.” The noun corresponding to the adjective “rationalistic” is “rationalism”...

Such a rational theory does not deny that men, human groups, or classes are driven by motives other than intellectual one – for instance by superstition, religion, or repressed drives – in short, that these irrational forces play a more or less decisive role. The rational approach takes the existence of any irrational elements into account, it attempts to explain them, to show how and why such an irrational sphere exists, and, on an individual basis with the aid of psychology, and with the aid of sociology on the basis of social forces, to explain why the relation between rational and irrational is changing.

A *rationalistic* approach, on the other hand (for example, that of natural law and of Kantian philosophy) considers man as a purely intellectual being, as a mere point of attribution.

Whenever we speak of “rational” or “rationality” we mean this kind of rationality and nothing else. When we say that state and law are founded secularly and rationally we mean only that the state and the law are neither creations of God nor institution of the devil; that they are neither super- nor sub-human institutions, but that they are simply human institutions springing from the wills or the needs of men.<sup>135</sup>

What Neumann does here is distinguish between rational observation of a phenomenon and a phenomenon’s strict rational behavior. This helps to clarify the above distinction between rational political theories and scientific theories through this distinction. A rational theory of politics will use reason to understand phenomena that may not admit of it. A science of politics, unless it is a misnomer, would entail that politics correspond to scientific method – and all of the criteria of scientific method demand that the phenomenon itself behave rationalistically – that is, the behavior itself conforms to the rational axioms that science is able to deduce from its labors.

Beyond scientism in politics, this thesis raises the question ‘what is political knowledge?’ which is interrelated to the broader question of ‘what is it to be political?’ A question of what is it to be political entails another question as well, ‘what is the general nature of

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<sup>135</sup> Neumann, Franz. *The Rule of Law: Political Theory and the Legal System in Modern Society*. (Dover: Berg Publishers, Ltd., 1986), 27-28.



human being,' insofar as politics is a phenomenon that springs from human activities. Thus, in the discussion of the philosophical roots of realism, as a response to scientism in social science, investigations into these two questions ('what is politics/political knowledge?' and 'what is human nature?') will serve as the general guidelines for this analysis, even where not explicit. Moreover, related to these questions are that of what any theory of politics purports: from "what is it to be political" the question "what should I do" either in a purely abstract normative sense and in an instrumental sense naturally follows – and all of these are interrelated as knowledge about a phenomenon naturally endows the holder of that knowledge with a superior ability to behave in response to it – which is to say superior control over that phenomenon.

Why bother discussing human nature at all though? Doing political theory, or even accounting for anything related to human behavior (sociology, economics, psychology, etc.), will carry, of necessity, some assumptions of human nature, be they implicit or explicit.<sup>136</sup> For Morgenthau's account, this comes about from his own indication, provided by his first principle of political realism. Assumptions of human nature naturally have implications for political theory because it determines how a philosopher, theorist, or politician perceives the objects of their study and practice. This, in turn, determines what they believe those objects will be capable of, in theory and in practice, and therefore what sort of explanation, predictions, and prescriptions they will make. In reverse, a political theory or philosophy prescribes actions (with whatever intended outcome) to agents; explanation, predictions, and prescriptions carry some implicit consideration of what can and will be done by those agents. To do otherwise would be irrational. "All coherent thought must rest on a claim about human nature,"<sup>137</sup> especially a philosophical account of collective and interactive human behavior. The way in which humans conduct politics and the issues which politicking seeks to address ultimately derive from conditions and

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<sup>136</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Decline of Democratic Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press 1962), 121; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations (Sixth Edition)*. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 3. Cf. Beiner, Ronald. *Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit: Essays on Contemporary Theory*. (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 108, 123, 126.

<sup>137</sup> Pangle, Thomas L. "Critical Response to "Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss." In Beiner, Ronald. *Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit: Essays on Contemporary Theory*. (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 123.

problems within human nature. This is claim that is not unique to Morgenthau, but arises from the history of Western philosophy.

Importantly, part of the broader intent of this thesis is to show that these issues are not an aberration from Morgenthau's more explicit realist project, especially what he outlines in *Politics among Nations*. A common critique is that there were two different Morgenthaus – a pre-*Politics among Nations* Morgenthau (the Morgenthau who wrote *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946)) and a post-*Politics among Nations* (first published in 1948) Morgenthau. The best way to show this is, obviously, to show that contradictions between the two main texts that mark these two periods, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* and *Politics among Nations*, are resolvable and thus simply not there. This is not always possible, however, because *Politics among Nations* is one of Morgenthau's most empirically grounded texts. However, the second best way to show this is to demonstrate that, while Morgenthau was writing *Politics among Nations*, he continued to advocate and use the ideas from *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. This is shown by texts written during and after the five major revisions of *Politics among Nations* that Morgenthau would make (after its 1948 publication, it was revised in 1954, 1960, 1967, 1973, 1978, and posthumously in 1985), texts that include *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960), *The Decline of Democratic Politics* (1962), *The Restoration of American Politics* (1962), *Truth and Power* (1970), and most importantly *Science: Servant or Master?* (1972) and which can be corroborated with further references, when possible, to texts written prior to *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, including *La Réalité des Normes, en Particulier des Normes du Droit International; Fondements d'une Théorie des Normes* (1934), "Positivism mal compris et théorie réaliste du Droit international" (1936), and "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law" (1940) All of the above texts share some fundamental qualities – especially related to the critique of the role of science in the social sciences – which can also be found in both *Politics among Nations* and *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* – not to mention citations made to both books for elaborations of points. This is all to say that, although this thesis does not attempt to say that

Morgenthau's thinking did not evolve, there was a clear static, rational philosophical core at the heart of his writings throughout his academic career.

### 3.0 Groundwork in a Genealogical Correction of Realism

Realism began as a Weberian-influenced development beyond German positivist thought, the dominant school of thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany. Realism originates not in politics, however, but in jurisprudence.<sup>138</sup> The term “realism,” for Morgenthau, was intended to characterize itself in contrast, not to ‘idealism,’ but to positivism. This does not mean that Morgenthau is a “legal realist,” as in the American tradition, although there are some clear affinities with it. Morgenthau's real or functional legal theory has several fundamental theoretical claims.<sup>139</sup> That Morgenthau's realism began in law should suggest something about its relation to *Realpolitik* – that *Realpolitik* is not of primary import, if it is of any import at all, and that although there are some superficial overlaps between realism and *Realpolitik*, these are accidentals. This can be shown in discussion of how realism starts from a positivist base and critiques it. Realism was to move beyond positivism, by fixing the theoretical flaws in it that Morgenthau had detected, in particular in Kelsen's application of it.<sup>140</sup> Kelsen's positivism draws many of its analytic maxims from Kant's first critique (such as the delimitation of fields), but attempts to do so without appeal to Kantian metaphysics, or any metaphysics for that matter, in conjunction with scientism – restricting itself to empiricism in an attempt to arrive to uncontroversial, scientific truths. Morgenthau does not absolutely reject Kelsen's Kantian basis, but shows how positivist empiricism runs aground in theoretical contradictions or shortcomings:

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<sup>138</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau began his career studying, not politics or philosophy, but law. His first uses of realism are related to legal theory, not political theory. Cf. *La Réalité des Normes*. “Positivism mal compris.” “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law.”

<sup>139</sup> The following theoretical axioms are drawn primarily from “Positivism mal compris” and “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” but to a lesser extent from a reading of *La Réalité des Normes*. See Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 273.

<sup>140</sup> “Positivism mal compris,” 1099, 1099; Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 282-283.

- It embraces the theoretical indeterminacy of law, due to the necessity of judicial interpretation in its application to delict, that is, the particular characteristics of each scenario that merits a decision on what to do, as well as upon the role that the decision-maker – be it a political or a legal one – must undertake in “judging” that particular in addition.<sup>141</sup> The law is indeterminate because the law does not judge, but a human must necessarily judge a delict; and humans are victims of Nietzschean perspectivism.<sup>142</sup>
- It rejects the delimitation of law from other normative elements, such as ethics and mores, and from sociological influences (as positivism seeks to do with law). One such important element, the political influences in the law, is especially significant for this.<sup>143</sup>
- It rejects a strict separation of facts and values – not in the direction of natural law (i.e. because things are such and such a way, this is the way in which they ought to be) – and forwards that norms (in a broad sense including morals and the law) have a strong impact on the behavior of political and legal agents, behavior which in turn affects and reshapes normativity.<sup>144</sup> This is despite the non-empirical nature of norms. In other words, although values are not empirical, they do have a strong effect on the mind, therefore they do affect empirical phenomena.
- It rejects scientific, as disinterested and objective, approaches to the law, because the possibility of understanding social reality from external to it (i.e. value-free) is impossible given the relation of the subject to the object as they are one and the same (he calls a technical science of law “a futile expectation,” given the role metaphysics and sociology play in his functionalism, this comes as no surprise.).<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Morgenthau, *La Réalité des normes*, 41-43, 220, 227; “Théorie des sanctions internationales,” 478-483, 490; “Positivismisme mal compris,” 1099, 1099. Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 282. Cf. Koskeniemi, 456-458.

<sup>142</sup> Nietzschean perspectivism will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters, see the below outline

<sup>143</sup> Morgenthau, “Positivismisme mal compris,” 1099, 1099. Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 263, 267-268, 274, 280. Cf. Koskeniemi, 453, 489; Frei, 39, 136-137.

<sup>144</sup> Morgenthau, *La notion du politique*, 61; *La Réalité des normes*, 41-43, 53; “Positivismisme mal compris,” 1099, 1099; Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 270-271. Cf. Koskeniemi, 456-457; Frei, 134.

<sup>145</sup> Morgenthau, *La Réalité des normes*, 1099; “Positivismisme mal compris,” 1099, 1099; “Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 284 (for quotation). Cf. Koskeniemi, 443, 448-449.

Law is not value free, but politically charged (although, crucially, law has a status-quo political orientation).<sup>146</sup>

- Finally, it accepts and analyzes that the “functionality” of a law, as its observance and sanctioning by the subjects and executors of the law, determines the reality of law, not the formal enactment of the law; this has consequences from law’s indeterminacy: that the political and extra-legal normative interests of a particular group (e.g. state) affect the way in which a particular law will be interpreted.<sup>147</sup>

Morgenthau’s political theory will have some similarities to the above legal realist formulations. However, the point is not to draw a parallel between Morgenthau’s legal and political theories, but to begin to distance Morgenthau’s realism from *Realpolitik*, so that an honest and unbiased interpretation is possible, which is to say that we need to stop conceiving of Morgenthau’s realism as the next step in the genealogical chain from Machiavelli to whomever.

As a critique of the typical positivism, in both its political and legal formulations, realism incorporates what Karl Mannheim<sup>148</sup> and other German critics of positivism – including even Hans Kelsen in his critique of non-Kelsenian, or “unfaithful,” positivisms<sup>149</sup> – were able to recognize in the early twentieth century: that the denial of an appeal to metaphysics, typical of positivism, was not actually devoid of metaphysical claims, it was just an implicit or ‘negative’ metaphysics and that positivism demands utter isolation of its appropriate phenomenal field, which, although providing analytical quality to events, did not

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<sup>146</sup> This is a product of Morgenthau’s Weberian heritage, which adopts a peculiar form of neo-Kantian metaphysics hinging on the *hiatus irrationalis*, or a divide between concept (as rational) and reality (as irrational) – cf. Oakes, Guy. *Weber and Rickert: Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 19-20, 22, 53-56, 64-68. It attempts to overcome the infinite nature of reality through the mind’s imposition of concepts or theories to make it categorizable and understandable; obviously however, this carries the implication that any rational concept applied to irrational reality entails a perspectivalism originating from the theorists’ endemic particular bias.

<sup>147</sup> Morgenthau, “Positivism mal compris,” 1099, 1099; Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 265, 268, 272-273, 276. Cf. Koskeniemi, 454-457; Frei, 132-133, 135, 137-138.

<sup>148</sup> Mannheim, Karl. *From Karl Mannheim*. Ed. Kurt Wolff. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1099, 1099. Cf. Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. Trans Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 104-106, 112-117. For Morgenthau’s relations to Mannheim, cf. Morgenthau, “Fragments of an Intellectual Autobiography,” 14; Frei, 116-117, 150.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Kelsen, Hans. *Hauptprobleme der Staatsrechtslehre*. (1912)

sufficiently reflect those phenomena in practice. Realism, while not completely rejecting all positivist approaches, attempts to fix this problem by expanding the scope of its investigation to include phenomena that do not have empirical existence and to allow for events beyond the scope of the subject being investigate (e.g. extra-legal events in the case of jurisprudence) to fix certain basic presumptions of positivism, those which still were metaphysically legitimate, in its own metaphysics and epistemology. In fact, Morgenthau saw Kelsenian positivism, and its corresponding critique of other positivisms for their inauthentic, unfaithful method, as the junction between an increasingly discredited general positivistic paradigm and his own, more legitimate, legal ‘realism’ or later ‘functionalism’ after he moved to the US (possibly to differentiate it from American Legal Realism).<sup>150</sup> Namely, realism does not attempt to deny metaphysics (i.e. it is not strictly empirical, but allows for “queer” beings such as values and the mind of agents) and it simultaneously attempts to ground its positive delimitation of a particular field (politics) in the broader spectrum of social reality. In other words, one of the attempts to realism is not to reduce all social phenomena to merely political phenomena (or outline some essential political element in all social phenomena), but to present a “pure” study of some particular phenomena that occurs in an impure environment.

Morgenthau’s critique of positivism was not to be an attempt to arrive to an alternative science of law (or any social science in a strict sense of science). Stefano Guzzini, for example, claims Morgenthau’s early legal work was an attempt to make a better positivism (as a better science of law).<sup>151</sup> However this claim cannot make any sense when confronted with Morgenthau’s own statements. Namely, Morgenthau’s legal theory specifically criticizes positivism (and Kelsen’s Pure Theory) for omitting non-empirical, unobservable phenomena from legitimate analysis.<sup>152</sup> They are omitted because non-empirical, unobservable phenomena are not legitimate as objects of scientific knowledge. Consider the

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, “Positivism mal compris”; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law.” *The American Journal International Law*. (1940, 34.2). Morgenthau, Hans J. “Reflections on the State of Political Science.” *The Review of Politics*. (1955, 17.4), 449-450.

<sup>151</sup> Guzzini, 38.

<sup>152</sup> Morgenthau, *La Réalité des normes*. 1099; “Positivism mal compris,” 1099 ; “Positivism, Functionalism and International Law,” 268-269, 282-284.

following definition of science (or, what is ‘scientific’) according to scientific method, explanations must be formal (statements must be generalized, rational axioms), explanations must be causally accountable, and events must be repeatable (correspond to the requirements of *ceteris paribus*).<sup>153</sup> However, for social science, according to Morgenthau, values/norms and power, and other metaphysical concepts, are vital causal factors despite their non-empirical, directly-unobservable nature.<sup>154</sup> To sustain a claim that normativity is still science would demand a type of science alien to any contemporarily accepted definition, as science is de facto based on observation and empiricism (not to mention experimental reproducibility in social science, something else Morgenthau refutes).<sup>155</sup> Despite Morgenthau’s own use of the term science, it cannot correspond to any contemporary understanding of science without rejecting the majority of Morgenthau’s points.

Morgenthau is clearly appealing to some phenomena that are of necessity speculative and unknowable with certainty, which he seeks to validate the non-empirical through empirical observation of their effects (this does not, however eliminate that speculative nature, it merely confirms them). However, the above generally accepted definition of science precludes such phenomena *a priori*. In addition, those empirical social phenomena that could be studied by ‘science’ are disqualified for different reasons. A pure approach to a phenomenon is already violence against how that phenomenon actually *is*; the “laboratory” represents the extreme form of violence against “nature,” even if it can provide some

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<sup>153</sup> Dupré, John. *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10; Elster, Jon. “When Rationality Fails.” In *The Limits of Rationality*. Karen Schweers Cook and Margaret Levi (Eds.). (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990)24. Cf. Cat, Jordi. “The Unity of Science.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2007). <http://www.science.uva.nl/~seop/entries/scientific-unity/>

<sup>154</sup> Morgenthau, *La Réalité des normes*, 1099; “Positivisme mal compris,” 1099, 1099; Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 268-269, 282-284; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 211-215; Cf. Koskeniemi, 444, 454-455.

Guzzini later claims that Morgenthau thinks power is measurable (Guzzini, Stefano. “The Enduring Dilemmas of Realism in International Relations.” *European Journal of International Relations*. (2004, 10.4), 527-538; as well as Freyberg-Inan, 86). What Morgenthau claims is that power is a quality, and not a quantity, and that although comparable, there is never any objective, comparative way to assess it. Power cannot be accounted for (or “measured”), it can only be qualitatively estimated. (Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 170-171, 174, 178, 223-227, 228.)

<sup>155</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 125, 131-133; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 27-28, 40-45, 62-63; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 47.

insights into aspects of nature in its violent methodology; there is no way in which to repeat social phenomena to arrive to scientific certitude about a phenomenon. Thus, the type of legal theory Morgenthau is attempting to construct cannot be classified as a type of positivism, even if it does incorporate some aspects of positivism.

The unobservable, often non-empirical speculative nature of social science (via its normative, non-laboratory, and intentional bases), renders scientific certitude impossible to arrive to.<sup>156</sup> Thus, Morgenthau was not guilty of “advocating the scientific standard of philosophical positivism” or “endorsing empiricism.”<sup>157</sup> Even in *Politics among Nations*, the book some confuse as being a scientific treatise, he attacks such notions as “scientific utopianism.”<sup>158</sup> He cautions against treating the Balance of Power scientifically (or mechanically); the Balance of Power is a theoretical device to understand power relations between states,<sup>159</sup> but is itself inherently uncertain, unreal, and inadequate as a device – it is unscientific.<sup>160</sup> This derives in part from its basis in power consideration, which is a qualitative assessment (and therefore so too is the balance of power qualitative). An objective evaluation of the power of one nation is nearly impossible because there is no rational way to assess developments in one category in terms of others, let alone changes that occur among nations.<sup>161</sup> “This uncertainty in power calculations is inherent in the nature of national power itself. It [i.e. uncertainty] will therefore come into play even in the most simple pattern of the balance of power; that is when one nation opposes another.”<sup>162</sup> It is a mistake to think that Morgenthau at any point is advocating a scientific approach to politics, unless one has a notion of science that is inconsistent with any contemporary accepted definition of science and scientific method. However, redefining science should bring a host of its own problems.

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<sup>156</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10, 138-145, 150-152, 204-209, 221; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 47, 48-49; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 44, 52-54, 62.

<sup>157</sup> Guzzini, 38. Also, pp. 11, 30, 39.

<sup>158</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 43.

<sup>159</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 223-224.

<sup>160</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 222-223.

<sup>161</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 170-171.

<sup>162</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 225.



Morgenthau's appeals to objectivity and reason (in both early and later works) should not be confused with embracing "science," as the two are fundamental distinct (science incorporates the former concepts, but is not identical to them).<sup>163</sup> To make a rational claim about the limits of science does not mean one is making a scientific claim. Nor did Morgenthau "convert" to scientism, a claim Guzzini, for example makes, but does not validate against Morgenthau's writings published *concurrently* with *Politics among Nations* and its series of revisions,<sup>164</sup> writings that explicitly contradict such a notion and revalidate Morgenthau's basic thesis in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*.<sup>165</sup> This is a point strengthened by Will Bain's analysis of Morgenthau's late period anti-positivism, centered on his *Science: Servant or Master?* In fact, Morgenthau's very point was, while science is a valid system of knowledge, it necessarily stands upon a more comprehensive system that can provide for what science and scientific method are de facto limited in accomplishing; it is this comprehensive system that we are losing sight of, and in doing so endangering ourselves.<sup>166</sup> Thus, for political "science" to be effective, it must have a grounding in and awareness of knowledge that is unscientific, so to speak.

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<sup>163</sup> The struggle against the assimilation of the concepts of reason and objectivity with science was, in fact, one of the fundamental campaigns that Morgenthau fought throughout his career, probably an offshoot of his Nietzschean heritage. This is epitomized by writings such as LRN, PMC, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, *Science: Servant or Master?*, "The State of Political Science," *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, but elements of it can also be found in *Politics among Nations* 3, 10, 43-51.

<sup>164</sup> Guzzini, "The Enduring Dilemmas of Realism," 547-548.

<sup>165</sup> These include (but are not limited to) *Politics in the Twentieth Century* (1962), *Truth and Power* (1970), *Science: Servant or Master?* (1972), "Love and Power" (1962), "Thought and Action in Politics" (1971), "Reflections on the State of Political Science" (1955) "On Trying to be Just" (1963), "The Perils of Political Empiricism" (1962), "Modern Science and Political Power" (1955), and "Common Sense and Theories of International Relations" (1967), or his recently published lectures on Aristotle by Lang, given from 1970-1973. In all of these, Morgenthau is critical of the increasing role of scientific method, and science writ large, in (illegitimately and falsely) shaping political science, and social science in general, and how this detracts from the otherwise vital role of theory and philosophy (unscientific epistemologies) that are essential for grounding any meaningful science and makes political science into an increasingly dogmatic discipline that is increasingly unable to adequately address the most important issues, such as preventing war and maintaining global stability.

Regardless, the only way to sustain a "conversion" thesis, as Guzzini does, is posit a schizophrenic Morgenthau, a man endorsing different notions of politics in *Politics among Nations* and in everything else he wrote. The only alternative is to somehow reconcile the ongoing superficial variance between these writings.

<sup>166</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 134-140; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 60-64. The point is simple: Morgenthau is not anti-scientific (i.e. all science is bad/wrong); he is, however, concerned with people who can see science as the only valid epistemology (those who assimilate reason, science, truth, and objectivity into synonyms and not being able to think anything but "science" when they conceive of legitimate, or objective, knowledge)

Morgenthau's political realism attempts to provide a rational but unscientific model of politics – or as Morgenthau would say, “politics must be understood through reason, yet it is not in reason that it finds its model.”<sup>167</sup> In other words, Morgenthau's realism denies that a science of politics is possible because politics does not possess the properties that make it capable of being scientific, in the sense of the definition above. This is to say that the method for understanding social objects, politics in this case, is not science. Instead, the proper method to understand politics, according to realism, is the “prudential” method of contextualizing universal and abstract principles in a concrete and incongruous context, and this seems to approximate Aristotle's *phronesis*. Importantly for realism, this anti-scientism has further value, independent of politics but still related to social method: human nature, like politics, cannot be understood scientifically even though it can be understood rationally. Both unscientific politics and unscientific human nature reflect on how political prescription can function: political prescription cannot be reduced to ‘scientific’ prescription, as laws that are universal and necessary, valid as such without regard to context. When the unscientific natures of human nature and political are considered together, they should provide a strong critique of politics ‘unscientific’ nature. All of this will be demonstrated through a critical reading of Hans Morgenthau, and shown to be a fundamental aspect of his own political thought throughout his career.

#### **4.0 Direction: Chapter Outline**

##### **4.1 Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review**

##### **4.2 Chapter Two: Realism's Critique of Scientism in Ethics**

The argument in defense of realism and this appropriation of Morgenthau will begin negatively by looking at his critique of scientism its encroachment into politics. This approach is adopted to begin by narrowing down the spectrum of possibilities for Morgenthau's rational philosophical core by looking to uncover what would have been his rational core. One important manifestation of this, for Morgenthau, was in ethical

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<sup>167</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10. Cf. 149-152.

methodology. Morgenthau's somewhat stealthy critique of ethics makes the best introduction, as his ethical methodology is an approachable issue and probably the most discussed. The typical interpretation of Morgenthau is mostly based upon a reading of *Politics among Nations*. The conclusion that is typically drawn from reading this, in particular from reading the third and fourth principles provided in the first chapter, is that Morgenthau is an amoralist or a consequentialist (these two different concepts are often conflated). This chapter challenges this interpretation by reference to first Mike Williams' and Ned Lebow's recent reinterpretations of Morgenthau's ethics, where both conclude that he was not a consequentialist *per se*. Williams concludes that Morgenthau was a limited consequentialist while Lebow concludes that Morgenthau was actually a deontologist. This chapter then proceeds to the primary source and adopt Morgenthau's best treatment of ethics, laid out in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. In it, Morgenthau is surprisingly shown to be critiquing both consequentialism and deontology. Both are rejected for what seem to be Hegelian reasons. It seems as if Morgenthau's critique was derived from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, because a parallel reading of the two texts produces many similar points. Ultimately, as well, both are rejected because they attempt to reduce ethics to a series of law-like imperatives (be it the Kantian categorical imperative or a utilitarian thesis of the good) – in other words, both consequentialism and deontology attempt to make a science of ethics, rules that apply always and everywhere. Instead, as both Lebow and Williams are read to imply, Morgenthau suggests that either approach is inadequate when confronted with reality and how actions, ethics, and consequences behave. There must be some second-order guiding principles at stake in the presentation of either consequentialist or deontological logics, which renders them unscientific, if either method is to have any practical value.

This critique is purely negative, it eliminates some possibilities from Morgenthau's grander theory, but, before a solution can be presented the origin of consequentialism and deontology must be addressed: why exactly are these two theories held to be viable in the first place? The root seems to be in their common origins, something to which Nietzsche pointed. This root is in both the contractarian tradition, arising first out of Hobbes, and the

way in which contractarians must assume human nature if their theory is to have any general applicability. Therefore, consequentialism and deontology are both rooted in claims about human nature, claims that Morgenthau would dispute.

### **4.3 Chapter Three: Realism's Critique of Scientism in Human Nature**

Chapter Three deals with Morgenthau's critique of scientism in human nature, also known as *homo economicus*. *Homo economicus* is the default theory of human nature when it comes to the social sciences, from economics to politics, as well as even to analytic political philosophy. *Homo economicus* popularity comes from its power. It is desirable for those who seek to make social 'science' because it allows for a relatively uncontroversial formalization of human behavior: it allows for predictability of, and even certitude of and control over, what a human will do under certain hypothetical conditions. That is, *homo economicus* assumptions are the foundation for making the human sciences into a proper science. However, almost sixty years ago Morgenthau made his first critique of this approach. Morgenthau, in some ways, can be considered (accidentally) to be a forerunner of the current debates against scientism (or scientific naturalism) in philosophy, and in many ways the criticisms he presents in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, for example, are echoed in recent literature, such as Dupré's *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*., Sen's "Rational Fools," and Putnam's *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*.

This critique also shows that the majority of the secondary literature on Morgenthau does not fully engage with Morgenthau, but adopts his notion of *animus dominandi*, or some variation thereof, as the fundamental, monistic characteristic of human nature. Besides those explicit statements to the contrary, Morgenthau's critique of monism in human nature and, in particular, Morgenthau's critique of positions similar to the one's interpreters have put in Morgenthau's mouth should be an indication that such interpretations are in need of further evaluation. Regardless, by distilling his criticism of such attempts at scientism in human nature, it should be clear that the orthodox approaches to Morgenthau omit the broader perspective he grounded his claims about the *animus dominandi* in when they attempt to interpret him, thereby missing his point. While this chapter will make no positive

claims about human nature, it will elucidate his negative criticism of it and show several important reasons why the *homo economicus* assumption is untenable and also that Morgenthau did not endorse this in any way.

#### **4.4 Chapter Four: Unscientific Human Nature**

Following Morgenthau's own indication, provided by his first principle of political realism, a positive account of Morgenthau's philosophical core, and his political realism in general, begins with an account of human nature. Morgenthau's realism holds that there cannot be a 'science' of human nature; human nature is inherently unscientific. This is *not* to say that rational claims about human nature cannot be made, the point is rather than these rational analysis will not be able to yield a science of human nature according to the above-defined criteria of formality, causality, and repeatability. In other words, a rational theory of human nature cannot yield abstract laws of human behavior that will have determining value of actions for outcomes to particular cases. On the contrary, a *rational* theory of human nature will deny the possibility of formulating a scientific account of human nature. Instead, it will reveal a robust, unscientific theory of human nature.

The primary way in which a scientific theory of human nature is avoided is by refusing to adopt the popular, but fallacious, approach of claiming that human nature is fundamentally monistic, that there is one particular fundamental characteristic driving human behavior. The popularity of such an approach, like with *homo economicus*, is that it lends itself easily to the formulation of a science of human nature. Regarding this monism, although Morgenthau is typically understood as having advocated the *animus dominandi* as the force responsible for driving human behavior, he never actually indicates once that the *animus dominandi* is the defining aspect of human nature. On the contrary, this chapter will take particular care to show that the *animus dominandi* is *one* relevant characteristic of human behavior that becomes particularly relevant for study when manifest politically, even more so in international political relations. The primary reason for Morgenthau's attention to this phenomenon was in response to its dismissal (and the dismissal of 'power') by the political theories of his day. This sort of approach obscures the gravity that a characteristic of human

nature like the *animus dominandi* can affect in political relations. Thus, Morgenthau sought to draw attention to the *animus dominandi* and power in social relationships, but never to reduce human nature to this.

This chapter will conclude by discussing Morgenthau's robust human nature in depth, and in particular what it means for contemporary society. In particular, Morgenthau, drawing on Nietzsche and Freud, would seek to understand how it was exactly that some of the catastrophes of the early twentieth century were able to arise out of human nature. This allows him to draw some conclusions about the relationship between society and its constituents, and also to make some allusions about ethics that will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

#### **4.5 Chapter Five: Politics as a Tragic Art**

Based on what has been established about human nature, Morgenthau's political realism states there cannot be a 'science' of political action either; political action and prescription is inherently unscientific. This is shown to relevantly derive from human nature in the previous chapter. This is *not* to say that rational claims about political action cannot be made, the point is rather than these rational analyses will not be able to yield a theory of political action that determines absolute, universal, and abstract rules of political behavior in the social world. In other words, a rational theory cannot yield abstract laws of political prescription and action that will have any value in determining proper political prescriptions or actions for particular cases.

Realism's claim about politics rests upon a categorical distinction between scientific method and "political" method, a distinction derived from Aristotelian epistemology. This distinction is his five virtues of thought: what their appropriate objects of study are and how they are capable of understanding their objects of study. Most relevant to this discussion are the categories of *phronesis* and *episteme*. Science corresponds to *episteme*, while politics corresponds to *phronesis*. The crucial nature of this distinction is revealed in Aristotle's introduction to the Nicomachean Ethics: "Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all

discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts.” This is to say that ethics does not admit of the same degree of precision as other knowledge types, the example Aristotle provides is mathematics. The reason is that, in dealing with particular contingent situations and variables, whose abstraction would render their “being” irrelevant for utilizable knowledge of the particular case at hand, one cannot develop an understanding of them outside of their particular context. Therefore “rules” of politics will be, at best, vaguely formulated and uncertain.

The nature of the distinction between the objects of *phronesis* and *episteme* rests upon several distinct features that politics exhibits.

- First, politics is aesthetic in its broad sense, which is to say that it is a wholly empirical object that must be considered in its inherent particularity to be understood properly. In other words, politics is by definition ontological. It is not deontological. This is distinct from science, which is able to treat its objects in a laboratory environment, so to speak, which enables understanding of variables in the abstract. Politics does not admit this. It is always conducted in the world, and the background behind particular cases has a variance that renders generalized laws significantly less valuable. Even if it were possible, a laboratory approach is irrelevant, because valuable political action will never occur in abstract, but always in the real world where it is hopelessly polluted by variables which render simple laws useless. A laboratory approach would not discover or uncover anything relevant about behavior because politics cannot integrate ‘abstract’ politics into itself.
- In addition, politics is value-laden, and cannot be studied value-free as science may be able to be; this obviously affects the character of any so-called scientific study of politics. Politics, unlike scientific study, is always conducted in terms of values which are generally not universally accepted. Scientific study has met with little resistance because it can be held independent of human social and political

existence. Politics is inherently an aspect of human social and political existence, which means that political ends have important consequences for human beings, consequences which are usually in question owing to different value-schemes that individual embrace.

- Politics is inherently unpredictable and uncertain. As an approach to particular, aesthetic entities in an attempt to direct them toward some end, it is a state of becoming. Appropriate understanding of politics cannot be achieved until after the event has come to a close and the interaction of the different variables has been revealed as fact (rather than supposed).
- Politics necessarily confronts genuine moral dilemmas, in which the political actor must be capable of reconciling and resolving them, not absolutely, but to achieve the most that can be in the real world. This is unscientific because it necessarily must confront and consult values, as well as possibilities, in order to prioritize actions. Legitimate science can offer no guidance in determining which action, in terms of value, should be undertaken in a genuine moral dilemma. This is not to imply consequentialist reasoning.
- Because of actions' uncertainty and unpredictability, the ex-post facto justification of unjust or morally wrong acts for a "greater" end assumes a degree of control over and reliability of reality that is not actual. Thus, scientific 'means-ends' justification, and general consequentialism, assumes a control over reality that politics lacks. Because of actions' uncertainty and unpredictability, action is bound to have unforeseen consequences and outcomes. Politics is acting under uncertainty.

These are to say that politics is inherently indeterminate due to its empirical foundations which do not admit of rule formation. This uncertainty and this contingency render a scientific approach to politics useless; at best science can study history and abstract qualified laws of probabilistic outcomes. Given this, this chapter is the positive counterpart to chapter two – it provides the unscientific ethics or political prescription that minimizes (but cannot eliminate) catastrophe and instrumentally irrational decision-making in politics in educating political virtue and in particular *phronesis*.



“Unscientific” political prescription admittedly does not make politics a certain determinate affair, by definition, owing both to the nature of politics and the nature of humans. This leads Morgenthau to a particular conclusion: the tragic understanding of politics. This tragic understanding of politics has several rational components. The first is the presence of genuine moral dilemmas, which results from the inability to quantify and objectively (from science) arrange hierarchically competing value-schemes. The second is the divide between intent and outcome (known as *peripeteia*), which results from the inability to know with certainty the outcome of one’s actions and the difficulty in predicting social causality. The third is ‘fate’, but in a specific sense arising from the decidedly ontological character of politics, which is to say that the reality, social, temporal, geographical, and physical into which one is born relevantly constraints one’s possibilities and horizons, as well as delimiting conditions to which one will be exposed. The final characteristic of the tragic understanding is theodicy, which is the lack of correlation between justice, character, and reality. Noble and morally good agents can suffer the most awful and undeserved ailments while ignoble and morally bad agents can profit and escape any consequences. In addition to the above four points, there is the notion of *hubris*, which arises in general, but scientific thinking, especially about social reality, breeds a false sense of control that breeds a lack of respect for moderation and limitation in agents, when in fact the unpredictable and unknowable character of social reality should engender a fear or nausea of any action instead of its opposite, *hubris*.

Realism’s tragic understanding entails the following conclusion: the positive valuation of science, in terms of social action, is a symptom of the sickness of a declining culture. This is because it seeks to alleviate an inability to meaningfully shape reality through a surplus of theory, without any corresponding development or attempt at insight into how one is able to take appropriate action. In other words, social science, as a retreat from *phronesis* into *episteme*, is likewise a retreat from reality because it no longer is able to confront particular practical social problems. In contrast to a science of politics, which does not contribute to meaningfully shaping reality and, at worst, aggravates reality in its *hubris*. A tragic understanding of politics recognizes both politics as action characterized by present,

particular circumstances and the potential pathologies through its mimetic approach to reality in the form of tragic art – tragic art is nothing more than an imitation of what those artists perceive as characteristic of reality. Thus, a society in which art and culture bypasses the tragic characteristics pointed to above also, implicitly, does not perceive them as characteristics of its reality – essential limitations on the possibility for action.

A society which does recognize them, however, recognizes that these ‘tragic’ concepts are part of its own reality, and is thus capable of anticipating and responding to them. The two most important normative conclusions that a tragic understanding breeds are *sophrosune* (moderation) and *phronesis*. *Sophrosune* is in response to the recognition of *hubris*. *Phronesis* is in the recognition of the emptiness of rote, scientific abstractions, which further obscure the already difficult to discern characteristics of that particular social reality, with all of its competing values and dilemmas. Furthermore, as already indicated by the use of the virtue of *sophrosune*, realism cannot endorse either of the typical dichotomies in ethics, consequentialism or deontology, because both are guilty of a scientism that ignores the tragic understanding and retreats from practical reality, albeit for different reasons. Instead, as also indicated by the use of the virtue of *sophrosune*, realism subscribes to a type of virtue ethics. That is, it is inherently ontological or aesthetic but framed in conditions of objectively indiscernible yet relevant or even vital facts and lingering epistemological uncertainty. As indicated in Williams’ book about the heritage of realism, these conditions are best thought of as an attempt to delimit the limits of international relations and the limits of human knowledge.<sup>168</sup> it is through this moderate, aesthetic approach to politics that those normative ends, generally held by everyone be they consequentialist or deontologist, western or non-western, classical theorist or post-modernist, such as peace, can be tentatively achieved.

## **5.0 Clarifying Some Background Assumptions about Morgenthau and Realism**

There are several important foundational aspects of his methodology that fall beyond the scope of this thesis, but are, however, essential to his realism worth addressing here.

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<sup>168</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*.

## 5.1 Realism, Statism, and the Relevance of Human Nature

There is typically a considerable amount of confusion about why Morgenthau would bother to integrate a notion of ‘human’ nature and then move to the level of the state; in fact, he has been sometimes described as a sort of statist.<sup>169</sup> This claim could not be further from the truth. Morgenthau explicitly decries “statist” thinking, as well as other reifications of analytical social concepts (like “society” and the “market”) as “bad metaphysics.”<sup>170</sup> While this criticism may be extreme, Morgenthau does have good reason to find such a notion disagreeable. He explains it further in *Science: Servant or Master?*, saying that Hegel’s metaphysics reflects the need for a reflective consciousness to be united with the world, but does so through pseudo-religious, conceptual abstractions that rests upon an insufficient investigation (through science and metaphysics) into the nature of what is at hand.<sup>171</sup> Morgenthau, through his description of the constitution of states and their operation in his most important texts<sup>172</sup>, must subscribe to a position called *methodological individualism* – on which Morgenthau’s attitude could be summarized by the following: “Individuals are always the carriers of social forces”<sup>173</sup> and “the characteristics of the political must be sought in the psyche of the person engaged in the action.”<sup>174</sup> Moreover, this position is reinforced by his infamous first principle of realism: “Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives.”<sup>175</sup> This is to say that the laws of politics must be understood by the laws of society, which itself must be understood by human nature. Human nature is at the root of all social phenomena. This is a position which he would have likely first encountered in his rigorous study of Weber. Methodological individualism holds that

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<sup>169</sup> Freyberg-Inan, 67.

<sup>170</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Evil of Power.” *The Review of Metaphysics*. (1950, 12.3), 515.

<sup>171</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 66.

<sup>172</sup> *Politics among Nations* 117-118, 125, 180, 246, 266; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 187, 198; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 7-8, 15, 26-27, 69; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 254. Cf. Koskeniemi, 448-449, 454.

<sup>173</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen,” 4-5. Morgenthau Stacks Source: HJM-B-151. Cited from Koskeniemi, 448.

<sup>174</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Die internationale Rechtspflege, ihr Wesen und ihre Grenzen*. (Leipzig, 1929); quoted from Frei, 124.

<sup>175</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3.

“social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors”; this is neither motivated by a concern with individual atomism nor an attempt to reduce social phenomena to individual psychological functions, ‘a social’ is affirmed, but it is to guard against the fallacious postulation of a purpose without a purposive actor or inferring fallacies about the dynamics of collective action.<sup>176</sup>

To concretize and elaborate on this methodological precept, states do not have agency; for example, they can neither plan out what course of action to follow nor execute it – except in speech as a shorthand for what actually is the product of individuals acting toward some end. Of course, this is not to claim that individuals’ perceptions of what abstract groups of people, such as the nation, demand of them (e.g. social norms) has no effect. Social abstractions are vital to individual constitution and orientation, and as Morgenthau clearly states – human beings are irreducibly social beings, and we seek social recognition and are insufficient, psychologically and biologically, without some social life.<sup>177</sup> It is a reduction of empirical reality to its phenomenal components, without recourse to pseudo-religious supra-individual beings willfully “acting” upon individuals.

Given Morgenthau’s methodological individualism, the relevance of human nature to international politics becomes clearer: no matter what occurs among these abstractions called nations, it will always occur between individuals at some fundamental level – it is individual psychology, and its perception of a social, that ultimately determines facts about states.<sup>178</sup> Only individuals can be evaluative, only individuals can act willfully, and only individuals can exert power. Intentional action originates in individuals – as such, normative prescription is only relevant when considering that which it can affect. Therefore, individual pathology and individual drives, such as the *animus dominandi*, become vital factors that have bearing on the behavior of social institutions, such as “the

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<sup>176</sup> Heath, Joseph. “Methodological Individualism.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/methodological-individualism/>.

<sup>177</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 38-40, 86-87, 118-119, 244, 266. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168, 191, 220. Cf. Frei, 124-125.

<sup>178</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 117-118. Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 187.

state,” because those institutions are reducibly intentionally-driven by individuals. Thus, human nature is essential to understanding politics, regardless of scope. It is not a matter of Morgenthau’s transferring individual human nature to the nature of abstract institutions. There is no “nature of states”; a state’s nature is merely the nature of the individuals constituting that state. Of course, this means that the nature of a state is also a function of its regime-type. However, regardless of regime, there is a hierarchy of decision-makers who are most influential in analysis and interactions; this is the case even in democracy with the president or prime minister.<sup>179</sup> This is why individual human nature is so relevant for Morgenthau. However, in his own analysis of social phenomena, like nationalism, it is possible to see how individual nature, beyond that in decision-makers, affects and limits the capacity of decision-makers.

## **5.2 Rereading the Principles of Realism**

In this subsection, I would like to (briefly) articulate a coherentist reading of the six principles of realism. The reason for this is to preemptively avoid misunderstandings and false conflicts in Morgenthau’s literature by presenting the fullness of Morgenthau’s principles, rather than a reductive, one-sentence bullet point of them.<sup>180</sup> A great fault of international relations education has been to present Morgenthau’s principles as such, reinforcing any original misunderstandings about his realism through repetition. These (mis)readings have become almost ingrained in international relations, and absolutely require clarification, by specific textual reference, to fix them. It may be the case that these rereading later conflict with passages in *Politics among Nations*. While I believe these are resolvable as well, I would prefer to begin the clarification at the foundations – and seek rational coherence within and among the specific principles outlined in Chapter One before moving to coherence within the rest of Morgenthau’s work.

### **5.2.1 The Second Principle of Realism**

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<sup>179</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 119.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. for example, Tickner, 430-431; Freyberg-Inan, 64-65; Donnelly, 7, 11.

The opening sentence to the second principle of realism reads “The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of *interest defined in terms of power*.”<sup>181</sup> This is typically read to mean that, for realism, interest = power.<sup>182</sup> This is not the case, and even within that sentence the proper meaning can be discerned. In other words, the peculiar phrasing of this sentence, when it could easily have been written interest is power, is an important indication that understanding it to mean interest is power is wrong. To clarify the first half, the latter phrase, will be referred to as ‘concept.’ What the second principle aims to state is that realism, as a method of analyzing politics, is directed by this ‘concept.’ Thus, the second principle initially seems to be indicating not the content of that concept, but merely that it will receive its orientation in politics from that concept. In fact, the concept, “interest defined in terms of power,” will be left largely undefined until the third principle. It is in the third principle that both interest and power will receive greater clarity. Here, the intention is something quite different than to define what interest and power are. In fact, the third sentence clarifies it “It sets politics as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres.”<sup>183</sup> That is, for analytical purposes, this concept differentiates politics from other analytical spheres. This reading is reinforced by the preliminaries to the six principles Morgenthau makes, which is incredibly Weberian.<sup>184</sup> The purpose of a theory is “to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible.”<sup>185</sup> The theory Morgenthau wants to present is a theory of international politics.<sup>186</sup> The question the second principle answer is the following: “how does one know when what one is looking at qualifies as a phenomenon of international politics (what is it that makes international politics an autonomous sphere of analysis)?” The answer is this concept: interest defined in terms of power.

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<sup>181</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5 (my italics).

<sup>182</sup> See the literature review for this, but I’ll run through the grocery list again quickly: Tickner, 431,438; Freyberg-Inan, 64-65; Donnelly, 45.

<sup>183</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Weber, Max. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Trans. Edward A. Shils & Henry A. Finch. (New York: Free Press, 1969), 72, 1099.

<sup>185</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3: “This book purports to present a theory of international politics.”

However, Morgenthau does provide some additional clues in the second principle. The point of direction is to provide a post-positivist delimitation of the field. The label post-positivist is not intended to relate this effort to what is contemporarily understood as post-positivism or to have any theoretical interaction with it. Post-positivism, understood with reference to Karl Mannheim and critiques of positivism from the early twentieth century, means a critical approach to positivism that does not culminate in an absolute rejection of anything tinted with a positivist color, but merely to critically, in the Kantian sense<sup>187</sup>, adopt those principles of positivism that are still tenable and separate them from those which are not. Here, post-positivism means that the positivist attempt to delimit different branches of reality for particular study, while flawed, still retains value as method. The necessary corrections, beyond the scope of the first chapter of *Politics among Nations*, but which Morgenthau alludes to in another portion of the text on scientism in politics,<sup>188</sup> are the necessity of metaphysical recognitions, as well as recognition of the ideal-typical nature of any positivistic-type analysis, which needs reintegration with reality in order to check its theoretical honesty.

Morgenthau says that realism's analysis of politics receives its orientation from the concept of interest defined in terms of power, while economic, for example, receives its orientation from the concept of interest defined in terms of wealth, etc.<sup>189</sup> This is to say that political phenomena are characterized by the attempt to realize interest through the instrument of power; that is, to discern what a political phenomenon *is* or when a political phenomenon *is occurring*, power is the indication of that. Therefore, being able to discern the exercise of power allows one to recognize a political phenomenon.

The confusion stemming from this arises when Morgenthau later changes his wording in the third principle to "interest defined as power."<sup>190</sup> This implies something different – that interest, for the politically motivated, is power. However, nothing Morgenthau says in this

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<sup>187</sup> Critique stands against or in-between dogmatism and skepticism, attempting to discover reason's sources and limits. Arendt, Hannah. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 32-33.

<sup>188</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 43-51.

<sup>189</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5. Cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 48-50.

<sup>190</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 10.

passage, aside from the wording of this particular phrase, supports this view. Importantly, he immediately defines interest as anything possible. Interest, as defined by the third principle, does not add anything to the definition, and certainly has no fixed content. What it does clarify, however, is that it is the instrumental character of power that makes it political, nothing more. This is not to say that power cannot be an interest (it certainly can be, and at times will be as well as has been), but it does say that just by virtue of the fact that power is involved does not mean that the phenomenon is political. Power must be the instrument for a phenomenon to be political, according to realism. Thus, the phrase “interest defined in terms of power” for the second principle of realism is not an indication of what political interests are. This phrase is the theoretical delimitation of what constitutes a political phenomenon – power is the signpost by which decision-makers can discern when a political phenomenon is occurring (and thus, when political realism is the correct theory by which to understand it).

### **5.2.2 The Third Principle of Realism**

Following the second principle, Morgenthau defines interest and power to give greater clarity to these two more fundamental phenomena. He states, “Realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid *but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all.*”<sup>191</sup>

Interestingly, Morgenthau’s objective category here confirms the notion of rationality that is unscientific alluded to before. This is to say that rational assessments do not necessarily result in scientific laws. Reason does not of necessity a “scientific” epistemology. Despite the objective nature of what follows Morgenthau’s preliminary sentence, there is no fixed meaning to it.

Interest is an utterly empty definition. Interest can be anything that one thinks of that may be worth attaining. Interest depends first on historical circumstances and then upon the

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<sup>191</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 10 (my italics). On the phrasing of the concept here (interest defined as power), recall the distinction from the above phrase and pay attention to how the concept, regardless of its phrasing, is elaborated upon here.



political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated.<sup>192</sup> The aims of foreign policy (its interests) can be anything a nation has ever pursued via foreign policy, or may possibly pursue via foreign policy. To return to the typical interpretation of realism as claiming interest = power, this is not a complete untruth. Interest can certainly be power, but to make interest identical with power is something that does not happen (no one in reality, not even nation-states, strives just for power, power which can be striven for is still only an instrument), nor does Morgenthau claim that it ought to be the case.<sup>193</sup> For international relations he says, “The goals that might be pursued by nations in their foreign policy can run the whole gamut of objectives any nation has ever pursued or might possibly pursue.”<sup>194</sup> Thus, he is quite explicit that interest can be anything.

Power is a significantly trickier concept to arrive to clarity on, even when restricting oneself to just Morgenthau. In this principle and chapter, Morgenthau defines power as “comprising anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man.”<sup>195</sup> Thus, power is a relational concept, and control seems to refer to the will (i.e. one will affects another, without regard to what that other will would will).<sup>196</sup> He supplements this, saying that “power covers all social relationships which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another. Power covers the domination of man by man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safeguards, as in Western democracies, and when it is that untamed and barbaric force which finds its laws in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement.”<sup>197</sup> Power is anything at all that can enable domination, be it psychological manipulation or explicit violence – so it seems here. Moreover, there is

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<sup>192</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11.

<sup>193</sup> Nor does it make much sense for it to be a normative claim if it is not actually the only interest in reality (i.e. if the neo-realist postulate that states only pursue power is not true, then it makes little sense to follow their prescriptions on how to respond to that condition).

<sup>194</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11.

<sup>195</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11.

<sup>196</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 32-33. Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168, 192-195; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Love and Power.” *Commentary*. (1962, 32.3), 249 (“Power is a psychological relationship in which one man controls man through the influence he exerts over the latter’s will.”).

<sup>197</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11. Political power, in this and the other references is always a phenomenon involving psychological relationships. That is a relationship between two wills or minds.

nothing intrinsic to power that makes its coupling with other first-order social phenomenon, such as morality, impossible. Power and morality can and do interact regularly.

One of the reasons for the ambiguity of the definitions of both power and interest is because they are functions of social and cultural factors. Power, as a psychological relationship to affix control, depends on what is able to bring about that control; whatever that is that can bring about that relationship of control is a function of values and perception – values, at minimum, significantly shaped by culture. Likewise, interest is a function of values and perception, again significantly shaped by culture.

### 5.2.3 The Fourth Principle of Realism

The fourth principle is probably the principle most often quoted out of context, in such as way as to depict Morgenthau as saying that realism is an amoral theory.<sup>198</sup> The (mis)quoted sentence reads: “Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states.”<sup>199</sup> or some variant. What the unabridged sentence states, however, is “Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place.”<sup>200</sup> The omission the secondary literature has made *significantly* changes the character of the quotation. The first reads that universal moral principles have no place in state action, period, and is completely consistent with the typical assumption about realism that it prescribes to states amoralism in their political actions. The second does not. It reads that universal moral principles have relevant place in state action, but that there is some further act necessary to make them so (i.e. abstract principles are missing something, and that is interpretation into concrete circumstances).

Such a claim is supported with further references to the paragraph. He further states that judgment of actions, to determine their consistency with moral law, is an imperative (“Both individual and state must judge political action by universal moral principles.”), restating

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<sup>198</sup> Cf. Donnelly, 7, 11; Wrightson, 357; Freyberg-Inan, 8, 64-65; Tickner, 432-433;

<sup>199</sup> E.g. Donnelly, 7. Cf. Tickner’s reading where she describes Morgenthau’s appeals to morality as only instrumental (Tickner, 433); importantly, she avoids to engage with him where he claims the contrary in the very principle of realism she is discussing (Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12)

<sup>200</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12.

the relevance of moral judgment, and moral action, to politics. However, he does seem to make some contradictory statements later on, stating that “political ethics judges action by its political consequences.”<sup>201</sup> While this does not help the amoralist argument (nothing suggests this except a selective reading), it certainly does suggest that Morgenthau is a consequentialist. In other words, by judging actions only by their outcomes, realism is stating that a deontological approach to politics (i.e. a normative approach that does not consider the consequences whatsoever) is irrelevant to political analysis. This seems to be supported further by Morgenthau’s appeals to Weber’s “ethics of responsibility.”<sup>202</sup> Finally, the phrase ‘filtering of moral principles to concrete circumstances’ can be read to support this conclusion.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, one’s initial reading of *Politics among Nations* should result in a consequentialist ethic.

This is not the case either, however. Morgenthau, while not endorsing a deontological position, is not endorsing a consequentialist one either. This conclusion requires significant analysis, however, which will occur in a later chapter. These statements need to be read in conjunction with his simultaneous emphasis on limits – limits of knowledge (in terms of both assessment and prediction) and limits of capacity to control.<sup>204</sup> Moreover, combined with Morgenthau’s stress on moderation is his emphasis in this principle on filtering, which can be read to imply something different than consequentialism: *phronesis* in the Aristotelian sense. This claim is backed by his references to the virtue of prudence – the “consideration of the consequences of seemingly moral action”<sup>205</sup> and how political theory judges qualities of “intellect, will, and action,” all virtues of character.<sup>206</sup> The argument, to be later presented, is that the correct reading of this fourth principle is to interpret it as a

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<sup>201</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12-13.

<sup>202</sup> Morgenthau, Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 186. Cf. Frei, 224; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 174-180.

<sup>203</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12.

<sup>204</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5-6 (“motives are the most illusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by the interests and emotions of actor and observer alike.”); 10 (“political reality is replete with contingencies and systematic irrationalities...”); 43 (on what he calls the fallacy of the science of peace, it “starts from the assumption that the world is thoroughly accessible to science and reason...”).

<sup>205</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12.

<sup>206</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 6.

foundation of the realist ethic as virtue ethics, and, of course, the classical political virtues are *phronesis* and moderation, virtues with which Morgenthau completely agrees.

#### 5.2.4 The Sixth Principle of Realism

In the opening of the final principle, Morgenthau reiterates the point of the second principle: that the concept “interest defined in terms of power” is such as to allow differentiation between what is politics and what is not politics.<sup>207</sup> However, he qualifies the validity of the second principle here, as was alluded to in the analysis of the second principle; this delimitation is not meant to be a positivistic one. In other words, there is a broader world beyond the political one and that these types of analysis (economics, law, morals, etc.) are relevant – “The political realist is not unaware of the existence and relevance of standards of thought other than political ones,” in other words, political realists need to be aware of moral, economic, and legal theories to be effective in their own theoretical practice.<sup>208</sup> However, for the analysis of politics, the concept defined in the second principle is of primary import.

The importance of this rational is not to assert that politics is primary, above and beyond all rationale, as is sometimes understood. The point is rather to assert that there is a relevant “political” method analysis, one which deals with the phenomenon of power, that cannot be subordinated to law, morals, or economics – which was a trend he observed happening in social science of the early twentieth century. Large sections of his prior work, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, deal exactly with this attempt to assert the existence, not the primacy, of politics according to the second principle’s concept. Realism does not argue that all social phenomena are reducible to political phenomenon. Realism argues that politics is not reducible to another social phenomena.<sup>209</sup>

He furthers the point that realism holds political phenomena as irreducible, not to what everything else is reducible, in his conclusion to this principle. He states, “[Realism] does not argue that does not imply disregard for the existence and importance of these other

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<sup>207</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 13-14.

<sup>208</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 14.

<sup>209</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5, 10, 14, 16.

modes of thought. It rather implies that each should be assigned its proper sphere and function.”<sup>210</sup> In other words, one needs to be aware of the function of a theory – and this function entails also that one be aware of the limits of that theory, which further implies having some knowledge of the uncharted lands beyond one particular theory (e.g. normative philosophy and legal theory have vital roles to play for the political theorist).<sup>211</sup> Furthering the notion of autonomous analysis, he moves the discussion to human nature: real man is pluralistic and not reducible to the “political” man that realism idealizes for the purposes of analysis.<sup>212</sup> However, idealization of one facet of man’s plural nature does not imply that political phenomena are reducible to this one facet. Nor does it imply that man, in general, can be understood through comprehensive analysis of “political” man. However, if understanding of this one facet is to be had, then one must attempt, as much as possible, to distill what is “political” nature in human beings from what is not “political” nature. It is within this understanding that Morgenthau’s various appeals to human nature, most importantly the *animus dominandi*, must be understood.<sup>213</sup>

The reason for Morgenthau’s seemingly contradictory emphasis on power (that power is vital to understanding politics and that power is one among many factors of politics) comes about from what Morgenthau described earlier as the tendency of a type of liberal theory to subsume politics under economic and legal issues, and to ignore power as a phenomenon. Thus, his primary focus here is to try to caution against the dismissal of power and the subsumption of politics under one or both of those two separate analytical spheres.

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<sup>210</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 16.

<sup>211</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 48-50, 123-124.

<sup>212</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 16.

<sup>213</sup> It is worth noting that the *animus dominandi* is not referenced once in *Politics among Nations*. Instead, the phenomenon that is metaphysically characterized as the *animus dominandi*, is described instead as a bio-psychological or psychological desire for dominance (Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 33, 39.) . However, despite Morgenthau’s avoidance of the term, the substance of the bio-psychological drive is identical to the *animus dominandi* – therefore the terminology changes but the substantial argument is left unchanged. The *animus dominandi*, despite its omission in *Politics among Nations*, remained in active use in Morgenthau’s vernacular since its employ in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*.

### 5.3 International Stability, Peace, and Rule of Law: A Priori Impossible?

The genealogical relationship between realism in politics and “realism-as-a-critique-of-legal-positivism” shows how Morgenthau’s understanding of the role of law in international relations (or law beyond the confines of the state), contrary to the typical (assumed) relationship of realism and international law. Morgenthau never states or implies that international relations is in a state of anarchy,<sup>214</sup> and especially not one that is “ontologically” inherent to international relations. In fact, drawing from the above point, and looking at his political texts, including *Politics among Nations*, one can easily read that his claim was that enactment did not put law into effect, de facto.<sup>215</sup> In the six principles, he even explicitly states that the current configuration of international relations was not necessary and had no guaranteed permanence.<sup>216</sup> His criticism was directed against international law that was presumed in effect because it was enacted, but, in fact, was contrary to the political interests of individual states as a whole.<sup>217</sup> Given this, and international law’s decentralized character, a term he borrowed from Kelsen’s own analysis of international law, such law would not be “real” law, according to Morgenthau.<sup>218</sup> Thus, he denies some components of international law because they are not being observed, but this does not mean that, a priori, international law is an impossibility. In fact, Morgenthau

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<sup>214</sup> In fact, consider this passage from *Politics among Nations* (243): “If the motivations behind the struggle for power and the mechanisms through which it operates were all that needed to be known about international politics, the international scene would indeed resemble the state of nature described by Hobbes as a “war of every man against every man.” International politics would be governed exclusively by those considerations of political expediency of which Machiavelli has given the most acute and candid account... Actually, however, the very threat of a world where power reigns not only supreme, but without rival, engenders that revolt against power which is as universal as the aspiration for power itself...” Cf. Morgenthau, “Another Great Debate,” 983-989; In this section Morgenthau lists five important distinctions between political realism and Hobbesian type-anarchy; The argument is repeated in Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 99-112.

<sup>215</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 297-299, 301. Cf. Morgenthau, “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law,” 265, 275-276.

<sup>216</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12 (“...nothing in the realist position militates against the assumption that the present division of the political world into nation states will be replaced by larger units of a quite different character, more in keeping with the technical potentialities and the moral requirements of the contemporary world.”)

<sup>217</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 8, 303, 313.

<sup>218</sup> Kelsen would disagree with Morgenthau here: being a positivist, the accompanying sanction, while relevant, in this case did not significantly impinge upon international law’s reality. Morgenthau, however, as pointed to above, was not concerned with the positivistic enactment of the law but whether or not the law had a broader effect on society – namely a political and normative correspondence.

points to other forms of international law that do exist and that states do abide by, this can even be found in *Politics among Nations*.<sup>219</sup> Thus, it is clear that the Hobbesian analogy, of anarchy due to an absent sovereign and therefore insecurity and fear, often attributed to realism in the abstract, has at best limited applicability to Morgenthau's particular realism.

What Morgenthau is critical of is the understanding that the institution of international law *will* bring about international, or perpetual, peace, *like* it did, more or less, in domestic relations. Or perhaps better, the notion that the introduction of the rule of law among states will significantly pacify and reduce interstate belligerence. The reason Morgenthau objects to this has little to do with an inherent "ontological" condition in international relations. It has to do with the appeal to a domestic analogy which is then used to induce a law about the effect of the introduction of the liberal rule of law.<sup>220</sup> Instead, he states that, like all applied abstract social 'laws,' "peace is subject to the conditions of time and space and must be established and maintained by different methods and under different conditions of urgency in the every-day relations of concrete nations."<sup>221</sup> Moreover, the problem is that the domestic analogy (that the rule of law brought about peace in domestic relations) is a bad one; the domestic analogy about the introduction of the rule of law is guilty of confusing effect for cause, and cause for effect.<sup>222</sup> Put concretely: the introduction of the liberal rule of law was not what brought about relative stability within those relevant state examples; it was the pre-existence of relative stability in those relevant examples that

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<sup>219</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 312-313. Morgenthau, "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law," 272-273.

<sup>220</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 116. Cf. Morgenthau, "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law," 272. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 108-121.

<sup>221</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 217. Note that there is no a priori rejection of international peace, but that it makes peace contingent on particularized actions to international conditions and that if any peace is had *it must also be maintained* – things change, and so do international relations (from peace to war and war to peace).

<sup>222</sup> He would derive this from one of Nietzsche's "Four Great Errors" (who derived these from Hume). Nietzsche's Cornaro believed he had discovered the ideal diet to promote health, fitness, and longevity, a belief he derived from his own seeming success with it. However, Nietzsche shows this correlation is not, in fact, casual. Cornaro's error was of mistaking effect for cause in terms of his diet – it was not Cornaro's diet that made him so slim, it was his slimness, from his already poor constitution, that demanded his meager diet; any more robust diet would make him sick. This fallacious causal logic led Cornaro to universalize his diet and condition, even though it was not universalizable but relevantly particular to himself. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed./Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1982), 492-493.

allowed for the liberal rule of law to function properly.<sup>223</sup> In other words, there is a more fundamental cause that was responsible for domestic stability in those liberal states, and it was this stability that allowed the rule of law to function, not the other way around.

Thus, international peace is not a priori impossible according to realism. The problem is that the typical solution – in the polar dialogue between realism and liberalism – of instituting the liberal rule of law in international relations is a false solution, one that, without the appropriate qualifications, is bound to have no effect for the same reasons that its introduction in domestic states fails. There is a more fundamental reason for success in promoting peace and stability, one independent of the liberal rule of law. Moreover, this reason may even have success if promoted in international relations – although perhaps its promotion is not what anyone wants. Furthermore, this one successful reason may not be the only one. However, what is clear, both from the failures of an international liberal rule of law, as it has been introduced, and the failures of the domestic liberal rule of law, where it has failed, is that it does not succeed *de facto* at promoting peace.

Instead, Morgenthau's point is the inversion of what is typically understood about the rule of law: the liberal rule of law, in whatever system it is introduced, depends upon a preexisting relative peace and stability.<sup>224</sup> This preexisting relative peace and stability, which is capable of promoting and coexisting with the liberal rule of law, comes about from a more primary cause: a shared metaphysical worldview at the heart of a system. Thus, relative peace and stability came about from a dominant, common set of interests and metaphysics.<sup>225</sup> This secured relative peace and stability within particular systems, which then were able to institute the liberal rule of law as a guarantor of that system for the exceptions to its general peace (and to construct a stronger moral system to further guarantee that general peace). This dominant set of interests and metaphysics was none other than philosophical liberalism – deriving from the interest of the liberal, middle-class bourgeoisie.

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<sup>223</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 85, 103, 118.

<sup>224</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 118.

<sup>225</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 114-116, 118. Cf. Morgenthau, "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law," 274, 278.



Thus, Morgenthau's later "shift" on the possibility of world peace/governance was not so, it was merely his reaction to a shift in real international relations theory circumstances and a shift in the type of academic "opponents" against whom Morgenthau was arguing. He specifically addresses this misconception in the essay "Cynicism, Perfectionism, and Realism in International Affairs" in *The Decline of Democratic Politics*.<sup>226</sup> In other words, in his own time, people were making this mistake and he sought to correct it. His theory never precluded the possibility of world peace or functional international law like the liberal rule of law, a priori, so his changing stance on the issue does not represent a departure from his realist theory nor does it undermine it in anyway. This is why he is able to include an illusion to the evolution of international relations away from the nation-state in one of his six principles of realism, the third principle, included in the first chapter of *Politics among Nations*.

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<sup>226</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 127-130.

## II: Morgenthau's Critique of Ethical Theory

### Qualifying Deontology and Consequentialism

This chapter will develop a critique of the two traditional theoretical ethical poles, deontology and consequentialism, as made by Morgenthau. Morgenthau presents an interesting critique of ethics in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* that, at minimum, runs parallel to a similar one made in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Ultimately, Morgenthau shows that both deontology and consequentialism suffer from serious practical deficiencies as ethical theories, and rejects both of them for political practice because of this. That is, Morgenthau's critique shows that there are good reasons for political theorists to reject both consequentialism and deontology because, for different reasons, they are both practically insufficient and rely on knowledge that adherents cannot have. An important part of the reasoning for rejecting both theories in the context of the broader dissertation is that deontology and consequentialism have some inherently scientific qualities, which is to say formal in nature. This interpretation is consistent with Morgenthau's general critique of scientism in the social sciences, a position he most clearly outlined in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* and *Science: Servant or Master?*, but which he maintained throughout his work. The rejection of consequentialism should be particularly interesting for political realists because Morgenthau and his political realist project are typically portrayed as advocating some type of consequentialist logic – usually interpreted as that the state is justified to do whatever is necessary to achieve certain ends, which include at minimum the survival of the state itself (although they can extend beyond this).<sup>1</sup> The critique of normative prescription made by Morgenthau opens the way for a more fundamental reinvestigation that derives from Morgenthau's adoption of methodological individualism, the notion that social forces, including politics and by extension political normativity, are reducible to individual actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this is sometimes mislabeled as an amoral position.

## 1.0 Realism Cannot Logically Be Amoral

The typical dichotomy of realism and liberalism is simultaneously presented as a position of power versus morality, or amorality versus morality.<sup>2</sup> Insofar as amorality is to be taken at face value (and not an ad hominem attack on those theories it describes through the use of a pejorative term), it should mean one of two claims. First, the weaker claim, that realism does not prescribe actions to states – in other words, a reading of realist theory will not yield any normative claims, reality theory does not attempt to guide decision-makers in action. Second, the stronger claim, is that realism is amoral because it prescribes actions that only benefit the agent itself. These positions cannot stand up to any substantive analysis. They hinges on a definition of morality that does not come out of any reference to a philosophical discourse on ethics, that is, an invalid assumption of deontology (the strict observance of constraints, regardless of possible outcomes) as the only ethical prescription without providing any argument why alternatives such as state-centric consequentialism are amoral. Realism clearly makes prescriptions and , or does not deny the validity of prescribing action.<sup>3</sup>

Realism is labeled as an “amoral” position in international relations theory because it presupposes that any action is justified if the state has the power to undertake it – in other words, because there is no justice in international relations, anything goes; formal

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<sup>2</sup> Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-10, 47; Tickner, J. Ann. “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. (1988, 17.3), 431-433; Freyberg-Inan, Annette. *What Moves Man*. (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 68, 78, 82-83, 86, 91; Pin-Fat Véronique. “The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the Mysticism of the Nation-State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau.” *Review of International Studies*. (2005, 31), 223, 224, 226; Wrightson, Patricia S. “Morality, Realism, and Foreign Affairs: A Normative Realist Approach.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 358, 385; Tellis, Ashley J. “Reconstructing Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 40, 42; Thayer, Bradley A. “Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism, and International Politics.” *International Security*. (2000, 25.2), 128-129; Legro, Jeffrey W. and Andrew Moravcsik. “Is Anybody still a Realist?” *International Security*. (1999, 24.2), 6, 12; Johnson, Thomas J. “The Idea of Power Politics: The Sophistic Foundations of Realism.” In Benjamin Frankel (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 241.

<sup>3</sup> Even a theory of something that does not “make” prescriptions itself but merely “describes things as they are” of necessity (if it is read at all) influence others actions based upon the consequences of that knowledge. However, this weak, descriptive form; this has little more than rhetorical value when investigated. There is no such thing as a descriptive theory, unless one limits one’s scope to make such a statement. But, in doing so, the actual effect of the theory is lost.

constraints on state action have no place in IR theory/prescription.<sup>4</sup> But this is only half of the story.

There are two objections to be made here. The first is a weak objection. It is that any prescriptive/normative commands are de facto moral, therefore to label realism as de facto amoral is to claim that realism accounts for no prescriptive/normative statements, which is not what critics generally mean when they call realism “amoral.” Prescription, *by definition*, is normative – one prescribes what one thinks ought to be done. However, this is a blanket critique, and what is more the problem with the critics who adopt the term “amoral” is that realism, although making normative statements about state action, does not make prescriptive statements that attempt to account for interests beyond the agent being considered. Thus, what critics of realism mean is that realism is hyper-selfish in its prescriptions. This behavior is amoral because it is purely agent-centric.

No prescriptive realist is actually prescribing “amorality,” even if they adopt this specific term in their writings. As Morgenthau himself says, “To say that a political action has no moral purpose is absurd; for a political action can be defined as an attempt to realize moral values through the medium of politics, that is, power. The relevant moral question concerns the choice among different moral values, and it is at this point that the realist and the utopian part company.”<sup>5</sup> Which is to say, there is a specific moral purpose, it is just not the same one that those labeling as “moral” or “not-moral” have in mind. It signifies what one ought to do, either hypothetically or categorically. Any political prescription logically is evaluative, thereby implying some ethics in the weak sense. It is just a matter of determining the type of normativity that this prescriptive realism contains.

Even the most “immoral” realist would affirm the survival of the nation-state as one of a fundamental maxim of international relations; for political theory to have any value, some normative “ought” must be prescribed. Moreover, because, de facto, a state is comprised of individuals, even if one assumes state-based agency, it cannot be deemed amoral because

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Donnelly, 7, 11; Wrightson, 357; Freyberg-Inan, 70-71; Tickner, 432-433.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Decline of Democratic Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 110.

the state's survival also predicates the survival of its constituents. The behavior realists prescribe is for states to act in the best interest of the system and/or their individual constituents (and the state itself). The end (the national interest/survival of the state) will justify the violation of whatever abstract normative guidelines formulated. Alternatively put, whatever immoral means are employed are justified by the justness of the end, or in Rawls' terminology, for the realist, the good takes precedence over the right. This logic is a consequentialist reasoning, but fixed within a communitarian scope – both of which are legitimate, well-founded ethical theories.

To describe the above position, “the consequentialist reasoning, but restricted to a communitarian scope,” as immoral, *de facto*, is to smuggle one's prejudices against normative theories that have consequentialist orientations at heart, even if that consequentialism is not the absolute good of the all, into an academic discourse. Again, however, as before, this type of consequentialism is not full-blooded consequentialism, since it presupposes some basic limits based upon identity and boundaries. That is, the national interest take priority over the absolute interest for whatever reasons the realist theorist provides (e.g. anarchy or the priority of national identity (for either normative or psychological reasons)). Moreover, as recent communitarian debates have shown, there are legitimate moral reasons for drawing such moral lines – to label such a position as immoral without debate is bad scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Thus, realist ethics runs parallel to a consequentialist one. It is similar insofar as it prioritizes the good over the right (as consequences > deontological constraints), but differs in that it may draw lines as to where consideration of the good ends.<sup>7</sup>

So-called descriptive realism (if there is such a thing) is labeled as amoral because it has no concern for normativity; it is purely scientific and makes no attempt to prescribe or prohibit action. However, no “descriptive” realist would deny that they observe states acting in

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<sup>6</sup> Hegel, as well, believed that there was no relevant moral extension beyond the nation-state to be had – it was a sovereign and self-contained entity. Extension beyond it would jeopardize the potential for individuals self-realization: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Philosophy of Right*. Trans. T. M. Knox. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1967), §259, §331

<sup>7</sup> I am indebted to Toni Erskine for pointing out the analytic distinction between consequentialism writ large and the realist consequentialist logic.

ways those states believe will preserve/enhance their existence (that states do seek to survive – states are, in fact, guided by norms and it seems that these norms are “good” oriented (oriented toward the realization/maintenance of the good of the state as the national interest)) OR that descriptive “realist” is actually being descriptive (setting aside the issue of descriptive social science for the moment) and is not prescribing amorality but is merely counting and categorizing empirical phenomena, a position which does not preclude ethics in prescription at all but merely does not take it into account from its own vantage point (i.e. ethics, possibly very relevant for states’ future actions, is not a matter of describing these empirical phenomena at hand). So-called descriptive realism’s concern for objectivity (and therefore positivistic blindness to normativity) does not preclude ethical prescription in any way – moreover, observation of states by descriptive realists should result in observing states behaving not amorally but in a manner that is parallel to consequentialism.<sup>8</sup> That is, trying to maximize their respective, albeit limited, good.

Thus, the “realism = amoral, liberalism = moral” dichotomy is rhetorical, and unjustified after some philosophical scrutiny. Adopting some analytical rigor reveals instead that the dichotomy is a more interesting and more profitable discussion: “realism = pseudo-consequentialist, liberalism = deontological”; insofar as liberalism corresponds to “right,” as, for example, the liberal rule of law (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Court of Justice, “international consensus,” the United Nations), a priori moral norms (such as (quasi-natural) human rights and Kantian ethical imperatives), and similar principles that are universally applicable, and realism corresponds to “the good,” as, for example, the national interest, the survival of the nation-state, the most stable international structure (as balance of power), waging war for peace, and the like. Positing the dichotomy in this language, rather than the rhetorical and unjustified amoral vs. moral language, will better approximate the discussion without smuggling in a priori evaluations

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<sup>8</sup> Any descriptive social science, however, owing to problems of objectivity inherent to social science, entail also affecting behavior. Thus, there is no such thing as objective social science because, even if the study was absolutely objective (could arrive to an Archimedean point beyond any doubt), it carries facts of social life that, once read by others, will be reflexively integrated into their social being. That is, self-knowledge will change the self and the social is an extension of all individual selves. Cf. Weber, Max. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Trans. Edward A. Shils & Henry A. Finch. (New York: Free Press, 1969), 1099.

of the positions. This, in turn, should grant a better assessment of what realism is actually claiming should be prescribed for International Relations. However, besides correct this language, the task at hand is to understand exactly Morgenthau's ethics, and to which of these positions, if either, he subscribed.

### 1.1 The Pseudo-Consequentialist Thesis: Machiavellianism and Realpolitik

Political Realism is understood to be consequentialist (or amoral) through an association with Machiavelli. Machiavellianism in politics is drawn mostly from his *The Prince*. Some of the most important axioms that realism supposedly derived from *The Prince* were the following:<sup>9</sup>

- Human Nature is self-interested, or at least self-interested in politics; political expediency is more important than universal (e.g. moral) considerations.<sup>10</sup>
- Submission to law/norms, if not voluntary, requires power (see above on egoism); obedience to the law is not universal, it may oftentimes require compulsion and even violence.<sup>11</sup> In other words, claims to authority and legitimacy as a ruler are irrelevant without corresponding political power to realize that rule by force, as necessary (see above on egoism and the law) – politics is founded upon power, not normativity or natural right.
- The actual morality of power's exercise (personified in the prince here) is irrelevant, only the perception of being moral is politically relevant.<sup>12</sup>
  - o the facts of political life are distinct from the values of moral life (i.e. Machiavelli was the first political *scientist*); these facts arise from empirical study of "politics" and are scientifically legitimate forms of epistemology.<sup>13</sup>
  - o Moral considerations jeopardize the success of a political action, and should thus be suspended from politics in favor of pragmatic considerations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*. (1099). Cf. Nederman, Cary. "Niccolò Machiavelli." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/machiavelli/>; and Fleisher, Martin. "The Ways of Machiavelli and the Ways of Politics." *History of Political Thought*. (1995, 16.3).

<sup>10</sup> Fleisher, 332, 335, 343.

<sup>11</sup> Fleisher, 355.

<sup>12</sup> Nederman. 1099.

<sup>13</sup> Fleisher, 331, 337, 343; Nederman. 1099.

- Politics is evil – actions done should have no regard for morality, and while this means they are not of necessity evil (or immoral), they may be so.<sup>15</sup>

However, already clear is that this is an end- or good-oriented theory, which is to say there is some sort of consequentialist ethics being applied. This is clear from the way in which the terms moral and immoral are applied. Although Machiavelli operates as a political scientist and assesses the ‘fact’ of immorality in politics, this ‘fact of immorality’ is done in the service of and with an intent to realize some good that is sought after, in Machiavelli’s case the specific interests of the prince as survival (both his own person and “lo stato”), not to mention the possibility of a unified and stable Italy bound by a rule of law (even if that rule was under a prince). Moreover, no contemporary political theorist would recommend that a decision-maker/statesperson follow the Prince to understand how to benefit just himself; the use of the Prince for IR, even in its “most ruthless” reading, is to maximize the good for a broader community, even if this community does not reach the limits of humanity. Thus, as above, this is not a case of amorality in any broad sense, but a very weak sense that is actually just an implicit rejection of consequentialist reasoning: “immoral” political theories are encouraged and necessary in the pursuit of the good/the ends justify the means.<sup>16</sup> But, as before, this is not a tenable position on ethics – consequentialism is not amoral.

In the end, this position is immoral insofar as it rejects a deontological ethics. That is, it is immoral insofar as it is not attempting to observe formal and universal normative constraints on behavior, such as the abstract right of an individual or group to live (the law not to kill). *This is not the whole story, however.* The political actions of nation-states, insofar as they are directed toward some goal, are of necessity ethical (even if that goal can

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<sup>14</sup> Nederman. 1099.

<sup>15</sup> Fleisher, 1099.

<sup>16</sup> Also noteworthy is that because human beings are primarily self-interested, it is necessary to have the corresponding power to compel them to be good (to obey norms and the law) because they will violate norms and the law when it is enough to their advantage to do so. Thus, the necessity of power hinges upon a human nature that is incapable of normativity to begin with. The Prince’s blind eye to normativity is not unique among beings, it is just a qualitative difference necessitated by the position he is in (normal or common human beings can afford to pay their dues to norms more than the prince can because they are under significantly less threat – in part due to the protection to them afforded by the prince’s existence).



be shown to be the product of poor or insufficient reasoning) in the weak sense. They are of necessity ethical in the strong sense because it seeks a good, albeit limited, for its constituents. The reasoning behind this is not amoral, but presupposes the moral worth of the goal to be attained as having priority over the amorality of the action undertaken to realize it. This goal is the preservation of a society and the survival of its members, a goal that lies beyond the narrow interest of the agent itself and a goal that is certainly normative. This goal, formulated in the contemporary vernacular, is often called the national interest (a rather empty definition in itself), but which always has a foundation in the survival of the nation-state as a functional and independent political unit, as well as the survival and wellbeing of its constituents. That is, the political actor, operating with regard to the national interest, assigns qualitatively greater moral value to himself and his community (and by extension his political self as a nation-state, ethnic group, or what have you) than any external consideration. The reasoning of the Machiavellian theorist is thus (regardless of possible flaws in this reason): all things being equal, obedience to formal constraints may be preferable, but, if the most fundamental value of group survival is jeopardized (which includes the particular practice of formal constraints that community has adopted), it becomes necessary and justifiable to violate otherwise formal constraints because of the greater value survival takes in this moral dilemma. This is hardly “amoral” reasoning; it is consequential reasoning.

Given that the reasoning is not actually immoral (in the sense of lacking any normative function), but uses an ethics quite different from deontological ethics, the use of the term immoral is actually not an objective or unbiased assessment of the ethicality of the position realism is purported to be adopting. It is, instead, an a priori rejection of consequentialism without argumentation, a rejection tantamount to claiming consequentialism to be fallacious ethical reasoning – a position that is incredibly controversial given the strength that consequentialism retains in contemporary moral philosophy. One may disagree with consequentialist ethics, but it seems brash to label it de facto immoral without providing

even an argument when their clearly is normative reasoning occurring. Consequentialism prioritizes the ethics of what it reasons to be the greater good over that of abstract right.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the common conception, which associates realism with a type of consequentialist reasoning (setting aside the fallacious and rhetorical use of “amoral” or “immoral” instead of consequential), does so with good reason. The adoption of deontological ethics entails a self/external limit to the achievement of the good, and perhaps even something as strong as having to abandon the good because of those limitations. Given one’s political responsibilities (to care for and ensure the survival of those for whom one is responsible, as well as to promote their further interests and good), consequentialist reasoning, based upon the priority of the good of a delimited community, seems to be the most expedient ethics. Moreover, for the achievement of the good, it is certainly more likely that the most expedient achievement of those ends will be done by disregarding the deontological right in favor of consequential good – one which also has hope beyond the immediacy of the present in looking toward the future.

## 1.2 Morgenthau among Normative Theories

Regardless of the accuracy of the common association of realism and consequentialism (I think it is accurate),<sup>18</sup> it is interesting to see whether Morgenthau thought that consequentialism was the most realistic normative theory. It is interesting beyond the Morgenthau revival at the moment because it has implications for contemporary realist theory (such as neo-realism) if Morgenthau turns out to be saying something different than they built their assumptions of realism upon. This is especially the case if Morgenthau is critical of the approach they adopt, because it could undermine their moral reasoning.

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, this begs the question, why cannot proponents of Machiavellianism or Realpolitik abandon consequentialist reasoning, and work with a deontological ethics, which would make them more in tune with the pre-philosophical intuitions that bring about rhetorical claims, such as immoral, in the first place. This is traceable, in turn, to the Machiavellian and *Realpolitik* theory of human nature – that it is fundamentally egoistic or self-interested and cannot be relied upon to obey moral norms when it can disobey them to its advantage. This foundation, however, will be discussed later (below).

<sup>18</sup> From here, references to consequentialism refer to the specific logic of prioritizing the good of some group – be that group the nation-state or all of humanity. This reduction is done for the sake of brevity and because the concern here is more with this line of argumentation (whether Morgenthau is prioritizing some good (i.e. the nation-state) or side-constraints), not whether his consequentialism was full-blooded or not.

Morgenthau's political writings do not contain much analysis of ethics – there are hints and suggestions about what a “statesman” or decision-maker should do, especially in clear empirical circumstances, but rarely is there anything on an abstract level – but sections from *Politics among Nations* can be and typically have been interpreted to be consequentialist – which is to say without regard to deontological side constraints and strictly fixed on the good of the outcome, in this case defined as the national interest (assuming that there can be no higher good achievable). This comes primarily from a reading of the fourth principle of realism, which does allude at various points to consequentialism. For example, it criticizes the classical (Kantian-attributed) prescription of *fiat justitia, pereat mundus* that can characterize deontology, and it states that “there can be no political morality without prudence; that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action.”<sup>19</sup> By coupling this with other typical interpretations, that the third principles’ “interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid”<sup>20</sup> means that nation-states’ interest is, universally, the pursuit of power and that the second principles’ dismissive attitude toward ideology and motives is directed against deontology, many critics and proponents of Morgenthau’s realism have arrived to the conclusion that states seek power and are justified in using it however they need to in order to realize the good (even if it means committing injustices in the meanwhile).<sup>21</sup> That is, Morgenthau is arguing consequentialism exactly as consequentialism, and Machiavellianism were presented above.

However, two experts on both realist theory and Morgenthau, Michael C. Williams and R. Ned Lebow have both recently criticized this orthodox “amoralist” (or pseudo-consequentialist) understanding of Morgenthau with more accurate depictions of Morgenthau as being either a “limited consequentialist” or “deontologist (pace Kant),” respectively.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, both cannot be correct in their conclusions, but a close reading

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<sup>19</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations*. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Donnelly, 7, 11; Wrightson, 357; Freyberg-Inan, 64-65, 70-71; Tickner, 432-433;

<sup>22</sup> Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Lebow, Richard Ned. *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

shows that both have good reason to reject the unlimited pseudo-consequentialist (or amoralist) reading of Morgenthau and posit those polar conclusions. In other words, maybe these readings are not as irreconcilable as they initially seem. I will briefly reiterate these now.

Williams reconstructs Morgenthau as a type of consequentialist. However, Morgenthau's aim is not to legitimate the national interest as the most justified consequence, but that acting as such (and with further qualifications) actually will maximize the good of the entire world-system. Because of a broader epistemological critique,<sup>23</sup> Williams shows that the absence of a truly objective stance with which to evaluate reality (and future consequences) through reason/rationality is an impossibility, and therefore politics is inherently uncertain. Because of this, despite Morgenthau's explicit advocacy of consequentialist logic in his realist theory, it assumes a different logic when it is based on agential uncertainty in action: "it [becomes] part of an attempt to foster self-reflection upon both the means and ends that actors pursue."<sup>24</sup> This is because, owing to that inherent epistemic uncertainty, any consequentialist ethics is essentially a gamble (of which actors should be aware if they have read Morgenthau and Weber), and this forces a second-order evaluation about the potential costs if that gamble is lost, thus, limiting (given intelligent, self-aware deliberation) consequentialist ethics. Epistemic uncertainty should entail a responsibility in politics akin to Weber's Ethics of Responsibility that, while consequentialist, is very prudent in the actions it makes to achieve that good end of the national interest.<sup>25</sup> In other words, consequentialism rests upon rational epistemic objectivity (to guarantee the future good), because this is absent any adoption of consequentialism must be qualified. This ends up compelling any rational consequentialist to adopt some deontological limitations (albeit, themselves necessarily accounted for by some second order principles) that can moderate the limits of rational consequentialist prescriptions.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Morgenthau cannot be a consequentialist without qualification because, when his consequentialism is no longer taken at face value, but coupled with his

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<sup>23</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 99-102.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 172. Cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 104-107.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 178-180.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 187, 192.

broader realist theory, it results in a very different ethics – consequentialism limited by that epistemic uncertainty so that it must paradoxically undermine itself.

Lebow, on the other hand, depicts Morgenthau as, contrary to every contemporary association of realism and consequentialism, a type of deontologist. Lebow's conclusion that Morgenthau endorses deontology is based upon a focus on Morgenthau's critique of consequentialism, which shares much with Williams' assessment of a limited epistemology. Because Morgenthau demonstrates that the consequences of actions are inherently uncertain, owing to epistemic limitations of future-oriented rational thought, consequentialism is rejected tout court.<sup>27</sup> This position is hubristic, and leads ultimately to tragedy, something against which Morgenthau vigorously campaigned.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Lebow notes that Morgenthau affirms a private deontology in his writings (that actions in the non-political realm are, in fact, limited by deontological side constraints), and Morgenthau simultaneously rejects any categorical division between the "political" and the "private" realms – since both are reducible to individual actions the same category of judgment applies to both.<sup>29</sup> Thus, if deontology is endorsed at all (and Morgenthau does), it holds *ubique et undique* in politics or in one's private interactions. However, this deontology must be qualified too – although it stands as a normative ideal, descriptive consideration reveals that the deontological norms are not without consequentialist exceptions when the calculation of the good to be had substantially outweighs the good of the constraint to be violated.<sup>30</sup> Because of this, Lebow concludes "Pace Kant, Morgenthau clearly subscribes to a deontological view of ethics, although he nowhere makes this explicit."<sup>31</sup> The "pace Kant" seems to indicate that this deontology is not deontology-*propre*, as the side constraints are constraints only most of the time (they can be overridden). This position may, in fact, be somewhat reconcilable with Williams' reinterpretation, given Williams already acknowledges Morgenthau's realism does admit, in a limited and indirect way, deontological ethics as a way to moderate the harshness of good-oriented consequentialism.

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<sup>27</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 221, 237.

<sup>28</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 364-367.

<sup>29</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 237.

<sup>30</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 237.

<sup>31</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 237.

Like in Williams' limited consequentialist depiction, this balancing occurs via what would have to be second-order principles that permit such a blurred line between consequentialism and deontology.

What makes the above polar claims most interesting is that both are qualified ("limited") versions of the typical understandings of Morgenthau. In addition, both manage to arrive to opposite conclusions in these qualifications. That is, careful analysis of Morgenthau leads to two separate first order principles (consequentialism and deontology, respectively) that must be qualified by some second order principles to do justice to his ethics. Thus, a seeming contradiction between two normative theories actually points toward a harmony, but this harmony is never actually arrived to – which theory Morgenthau actually endorses and what the nature of those second order principles is. Morgenthau is still confusing for the average reader. To resolve this, a return to the primary source seems inline, and to best accomplish this means moving chronologically prior to *Politics among Nations: Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. The reasoning is two-fold. First, *Scientific Man* offers a more analytical approach to Morgenthau's normative theorizing than *Politics among Nations*, especially in the form of a negative approach (i.e. what he rejects for normative prescription).<sup>32</sup> This is to say that he analyzes ethics in a far more analytic fashion, even if manifestly insufficient in so doing, in *Scientific Man* than anything else he writes. Second, the positive conclusions in *Politics among Nations* principles are less analytic versions of what Morgenthau had already outlined in *Scientific Man*.<sup>33</sup>

Analysis of the critique of ethics that Morgenthau outlines in *Scientific Man* results in a rejection of both deontology and consequentialism. A careful analysis will show that Morgenthau's critique seems to adopt many aspects of Hegel's similar critique in *Philosophy of Right*. Like Morgenthau, Hegel's ethics ends endorsing neither

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Wong, Benjamin. "Hans Morgenthau's Anti-Machiavellian Machiavellianism." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. (2000, 29.2) on this point.

<sup>33</sup> However, this reading comes from more than just a comparison of the two texts, but also incorporates readings spanning the whole of Morgenthau's English language period, as well as some of his French writings. Whenever possible, I will attempt to demonstrate consistency through grocery lists of citations to preempt a priori rejection of any reading of *Scientific Man*.

consequentialism nor deontology, but involves a critique of both.<sup>34</sup> However, Morgenthau does not adopt Hegel's metaphysical "objective spirit" conclusion, labeling specifically this conclusion as "bad metaphysics";<sup>35</sup> thus, Morgenthau cannot arrive to the same conclusion as Hegel did. However, the intention here is merely to look to his critique, and then to link it to a general understanding of scientism, rather than to arrive to a positive conclusion on the appropriate normative theory to employ in politics and more specifically international relations. Beyond the negative analysis of normative theories and their relation to scientism, the relation of normativity to human nature is important and thus a critique of ethics will be instrumental in introducing Morgenthau's critique of scientism in human nature. This follows from the crucial role that human nature plays in affecting political and social interaction, a role especially crucial to a methodological individualist. Moreover, the way in which one conceives of human nature significantly determines the way in which one conceives of political and social theory. A misconception of human nature will yield an untenable ethics (as well as other potential errors for a political theory).

If it is true that Morgenthau rejects deontology and consequentialism, as part of his broader critique of scientism in ethics, then this would move for a major reevaluation of how Morgenthau is read, taught, and applied today. This is the case because, when it comes to realist theory for decision-makers, analysts, and other political theorists who make prescriptions on political action, if they have read and been taught Morgenthau as, for example, a consequentialist and are attempting to impose that restriction on their prescriptions to be consistent with him, or, conversely, reject realism because it is consequentialist, then they have been operating in a false paradigm.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Wood, Allen. *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xiii.

<sup>35</sup> Discussed in greater depth below and in Chapter One (briefly). This position against Hegel comes from Morgenthau's so-called methodological individualism (the term originates after Morgenthau stopped writing on the subject). Methodological individualism is the attribution of action and agency solely to individuals, that "social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors." This is neither motivated by a concern with individual atomism nor an attempt to reduce social phenomena to individual psychological functions, 'a social' is affirmed, but it is to guard against the postulation of a purpose without a purposive actor or inferring fallacies about the dynamics of collective action. Cf. Heath, Joseph. "Methodological Individualism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/methodological-individualism/>.

## 2.0 Morgenthau's Critique of Deontology

Convention holds that Morgenthau was critical of Kantian deontology (although, as briefly discussed above, Ned Lebow has challenged this belief). There is good reason to believe this from much of his literature. Rather than drawing from the typical paradigmatic sentence from *Politics among Nations*, this will analytically present Morgenthau's critique of deontological ethics, as well as supplementing what Morgenthau actually says with Hegel by logically drawing out fuller implications of Morgenthau's points. In other words, while this critique will not add additional points of critique beyond Morgenthau's own, it will attempt to show that the points Morgenthau does make have greater logical (and critical) import than he wrote, which can be easily missed in contemporary readings of Morgenthau. This is either because he was not aware of the fullness of what he said or because he chose not to elaborate for some reason. Regardless, his critique of deontology is stronger than what he has actually written in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, *Politics among Nations*, as well as in collected essays.

### 2.1 What Is Deontology? Was What Morgenthau Critiqued Deontology?

According to the David Ross' famous book on *The Right and the Good*, deontology (right in his terminology) signifies acts that ought to be done because they are obligatory or compulsory, and this is so independently of any possible result of the action.<sup>36</sup> The English word "deontology" (and its derivatives) originates from *deontos* in Greek, which means "binding" or "duty" (or "right" in the sense of correspondence with what is obligatory as duty). Therefore deontological ethics should be an ethics that is determines the justness of an action based on the action's rightness, based on whether that action concerns right. This entails certain "side-constraints," which prohibit certain acts regardless of consequences and hold for all times and all circumstances. Kant may be the greatest deontologist philosopher, and his formulation of the categorical imperative – an ethical law that applies categorically (at all times, without regard to particular circumstance) – is a paradigmatic

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<sup>36</sup> Ross, David. *The Right and the Good*. Ed. Phillip Stratton-Lake. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 3, 4, 12, 16.



example of deontological ethics. Whatever the theory though, it will produce a set of rules that will hold always and forever.

Morgenthau does not use the term deontology in his writings. Unfortunately, the contemporary ethical terminology for the dichotomy between the consequentialism and deontology did not come into usage until after he wrote on the topic. He does, however, describe something that resembles deontology, and he identifies this with Woodrow Wilson's approach to international relations, religious ethics, and the conscientious objector to war (both applying typical Kantian reasons as ethical justification for their actions). He calls this theory ethical "perfectionism," and it is characterized by "erecting the principles of traditional ethics into an abstract, logically coherent system of thought which is supposed to reflect faithfully the ethical demands of reason."<sup>37</sup> That is, an abstract set of principles that reflect reason's ethical restrictions, arrived to without regard to the possibility of the intended act's future realization of justice (presumably, as 'the good').<sup>38</sup> Morgenthau uses the case of the conscientious objector: the objector protests an occurring war because violence is inherently wrong and ought not to occur under any circumstances; however, his actions do nothing to stop war itself and, in a Kierkegaardian sense, his action to not intervene against that war do nothing to prevent or stop it.<sup>39</sup> Thus, despite the intention to stop that war (and its accompanying violence and death), the actions permitted by a perfectionist ethic create no just consequences except generating "piece of one's own conscience" to the objector himself.<sup>40</sup> Despite the brevity of this definition of what perfectionist ethics is, it seems clear enough that Morgenthau has in mind deontological ethics. This case is furthered by his positing perfectionist ethics as a methodological reversal of what he calls utilitarianism, which will be shown to correspond to the broader category of consequentialism.<sup>41</sup> Utilitarianism seeks to avoid the problems of perfectionism by not separating ethical standards from political action (i.e. not constructing rules that

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<sup>37</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 172.

<sup>38</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 173.

<sup>39</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 173-174.

<sup>40</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 174.

<sup>41</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 172.

operate regardless of circumstance). That is perfectionist ethics, by positing a priori rules that must be observed regardless of their “real world” efficacy, reverses the utilitarian scientific approach to ethics based on means/ends calculations.<sup>42</sup> The bipolar theories Morgenthau contrasts seem to correspond well to the contemporary bipolar theories of deontology and consequentialism. Thus, it seems fair to equate “perfectionism” with Kantian deontology in a broad sense, and henceforth Morgenthau’s “perfectionist ethics” will be called instead deontology to contextualize it better in contemporary ethical discourse.

Deontology seems to have two plausible variants. One is purely intentional in the future related sense (i.e. I intend that the act to follow conform with the side constraints), and does not account for possible perversions once the intent is executed (e.g. “I thought that by pressing the button, I would save him, not kill him”). The other is more focused on the execution of the intent itself. In this version, while good intentions are important, what counts more is the actual conformity of the act with those deontological side-constraints. This version is the stronger of the two strains of deontology. This difference actually entails two different criticisms. While Morgenthau does not take this difference into account at all, it does seem that he does build a critique that can be applied to both versions, although the stronger second strain of deontology will receive most of its critique from Morgenthau’s critique of consequentialism.

## **2.2 Morgenthau’s Critique of Deontology**

Although perhaps it is already clear that Morgenthau does not agree with deontology, he does present a critique of it that is more than just a rhetorical or tautological rejection of deontology. It consists of five points that represent some of the typical points raised against deontology. Anyway, many of these points share an affinity with Hegel’s critique of Kant in *Philosophy of Right*, an affinity strong enough where it does not seem accidental. Briefly, these points are:

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<sup>42</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 172; cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 169.

1. Deontology presupposes a rational real world for the proper function of its ethical code, but in fact reality is un-rational – without an *inherent* rational order.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the intent for the act to conform (ad infinitum) to deontological constraints rests on that assumed rational basis.
2. Action presupposes a consequence of that action, therefore a lack of concern for consequences according to deontology is not entirely true.<sup>44</sup>
3. The deontological concern with intent of its ethical code can redeem ignorance and peripeteia (the notion of actions reversals) at the expense of justice itself.<sup>45</sup> Drawn from this, just action becomes merely cognitive (the right and the just is realized only in the mind of the acting agent; not in the world itself).<sup>46</sup>
4. The issue of theodicy and worldly injustice, which would go unaddressed/unresolved by deontology, drives the common man away from adherence to deontology in favor of some consequentialism that has hope of resolving such issues.<sup>47</sup>
5. The presence of genuine moral dilemmas (irreconcilable normative restrictions, where the satisfaction of one leads to the violation/unfulfillment of another).<sup>48</sup>
6. Deontology draws a line between act and consequence, focusing only on the intent and execution of that intent as action, but such a restriction entails an artificial division between act and consequence that is untenable. This approach to deontology suffers the same defects that consequentialism does.

The first point is drawn from Morgenthau's adopted methodology of social science, and rests upon an important metaphysical claim.<sup>49</sup> This claim is that reality is 1. Infinitely

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<sup>43</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 172-174, cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127-131, 136-140, 144, 151-152.

<sup>44</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 184-186, 188-189.

<sup>45</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 186.

<sup>46</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 173-174.

<sup>47</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 174-175.

<sup>48</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 190.

<sup>49</sup> Setting aside Hegel for the moment, this is a strictly Weberian move drawn from the *hiatus irrationalis* in Weber. The *hiatus irrationalis* is defined as 1. Reality is particular, concrete, qualitative, and contingent – whereas concepts (necessary for any legitimate science) are de facto abstract, general, (often lend themselves to quantitative analysis), and consistent. 2. Reality is infinitely complex – both qualitatively and quantitatively – which renders reality irreducible to any concept. (taken from Oakes, Guy. *Weber and Rickert: Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 19-20). This means that

complex (therefore unknowable in its entirety to individuals) in its construction 2. necessarily conceptualized, via idealization as abstraction, for any meaningful account of it to be rendered.<sup>50</sup> The problem this entails for deontological ethics is that it presupposes that its rationally formulated constraints will likewise be manifested in the execution of the action (and thus, the action will remain in conformity with those constraints because there will be no irrational interference to disrupt its direction). Deontological ethics must assume a rational reality for its ethics to retain those necessary constraints during execution (otherwise deontology would be a meaningless ethic because it would be impossible even in the most minimal sense). This is because obedience to norms that are completely abstracted from reality derived from reason, which is to say norms that are formal enough not to take into account particulars but are universal in content (such as the categorical imperative), must assume a reality that will be meaningfully impacted by those norms if justice is to manifest in the real world so that action, even beyond their “execution” will remain in conformity with those deontological constraints.

The important restraint that this “*irrationality of reality*” imposes upon deontological constraints is to claim that reality is irrational enough (or perhaps, normatively “incoherent” enough) that such an assumption is untenable.<sup>51</sup> One’s possibility to act in accordance with deontological rules is a function of one’s knowledge. “Since, however, reality is dominated by forces which are indifferent, if not actively hostile to the commands of reason, an unbridgeable chasm must permanently separate the rules of rationalist ethics from the

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concepts, and science, cannot adequately describe reality. Natural science, unlike social science, is able to circumvent this because of its interest purely in the nomographic properties of specific, delimited (delimitable, even), aspects of reality, whereas social science does not follow natural science because its interest (social reality) makes a similar a priori untenable. cf. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 1099. Oakes, *Weber and Rickert*, 22-23.

<sup>50</sup> There is a methodological distinction here between natural science and social science that, while important, is a peripheral. Briefly, what distinguishes the natural sciences from the social sciences is that natural science is concerned strictly with nomographical study of phenomena – that is valid behavioral claims about objects that can be induced into laws (in the strict sense of compulsory). Social science, on the other hand, does not have the same nomographic orientation that natural science has. Weber (via Rickert) will claim that it is based on a de facto interest in the particular, Morgenthau is vaguer. However, there does seem to be a further ontological difference that doesn’t rely on Weberian/neo-Kantian epistemology, which is an ontological difference between “nature” and man that renders any science of man either probabilistic (and therefore not science) or too trivial to be of any constructive value. This will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

<sup>51</sup> Externalities (non-willed) cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §116, §120R; Knowles, Dudley. *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 175-176.

human reality.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, despite an actor’s intent that his action conform to deontological constraints, the irrational nature of reality means that action may reverse from intent on execution despite efforts of the agent to the contrary. There is no guarantee that the execution of an act conform to deontological constraints as was intended. Action can undergo what the Greeks called *peripeteia*, or tragic reversal: actions intended to a certain outcome can be such that they necessarily undermine it. This is a product of the necessary (unavoidable) gap between agential knowledge and reality that happens when reality is not rationalizable and knowable in its entirety. The inability to have complete knowledge of reality indicates that perfect observance of deontological rules is not possible.

The second point addresses the nature of action once executed: act cannot be neatly divorced from consequence.<sup>53</sup> This, of course, will hold for consequentialism as well. In fact, Morgenthau formulated it as a critique of consequentialism. Because of this, this section will be a cursory summary of the critique that is to come below. There are three fundamental points to be made here:

- Action does not just stop; an act carries on infinitely (there is no “consequence”), until the end of history. A deontological theory that is concerned with the execution of intent (with action, as opposed to just intent) must account for the future possibility of any act to violate those deontological constraints before the end of history.<sup>54</sup>
- Any division of act and consequence, besides that end of history point consequential point, is artificial and partial. This is because any such “consequence” is not really a consequence and that the division does not derive from an objective vantage. Thus, the point where a deontologically motivated agent no longer needs to be concerned about the execution of the act being in conformity to constraints (if the agent is not solely concerned with the intention to obey those constraints) is an arbitrary

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<sup>52</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 172. Cf. Wong, 402.

<sup>53</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 186. 188-189. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §108-110; Wood, 141-143.

<sup>54</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 184, 185. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 99.

imagined line. However, this line allows that an act violate deontological constraints, this violation just goes unconsidered (the agent ignores it).<sup>55</sup>

- The imagined line is less arbitrary from a subjective vantage point – it represents the interests and intentionality of the judge who is able to draw the line (even if it is the agent himself). Thus, any division of act and consequence ultimately involves a retreat back into the mental realm of the actor, where the execution of intent ends (and where the agent need no longer be concerned with the executed “act’s” conformity with deontological constraints) is a subjective judgment if execution is a factor.<sup>56</sup>

Deontology, to be meaningful necessitates such a divorce however. Thus, the act will correspond with those constraints on action, and its intended consequences will also entail obedience with those rules of action; even if some future consequences subvert those very rules it is permissible because of the division. Thus, there is a separation of the act and the consequence, but one which projects it into projected, intended future outcomes without any regard to its real world manifestation (or its ontological manifestation).<sup>57</sup> Thus, either deontological ethics restricts its sphere of ethical analysis to the activities of the mind (intent and obedience to formal law and duty/right) – and thus purely within the abstract individual – with the division between act and consequence that can be ignored, discounting the real world contextualization and manifestation of an action in this focus; but this cannot make sense, for any action implies, of necessity, a “real world” causality beyond the mind.<sup>58</sup> Alternatively, deontological ethics must make a separation of some consequences of the executed intention (“the act”) from other further consequences. This draws an arbitrary line between some consequences and others, and makes this deontology a sort of consequentialism.

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<sup>55</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129, 141, 183-184; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 64, 68, 69, 70. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §120, §122; Knowles, 174-175.

<sup>56</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 166-167, 183. Cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 36, 118; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 70. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §108, §108A, §123, §123R.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §115; Knowles, 170-171.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §121; Knowles, 177.

Moreover, this shift to a mentalistic account of action from the action contextualized in the real world implies also that deontology is a selfish, or egocentric, ethical account.<sup>59</sup> It is an egocentric ethics insofar as it counts the justness of an action by an agent's justness. However, as already stated, action is an affect not just of the will of the agent but can also be for or against the wills of other agents. What one wills is determined by and affects upon the wills of others.<sup>60</sup> The action itself, even if in conformity with an egocentric deontological logic, has significance beyond the agent acting, and this is especially so when it is 'political' action, and may violate a properly formulated deontological norm from another egocentric vantage.

This leads to the third point in the critique, which is the egoistic or intentional account of action (as much as it conforms to the deontological constraints on action). This seems to correspond to the legal notion of *mens rea* (which is, as well, Kantian), a question of whether or not one had a guilty intent when they committed a criminal act. However, such a judgment without concern for actual execution of the action (here looking to the aspects of the act disavowed by the division between act and consequence) risks redeeming ignorance at the expense of one's responsibility to justice – negligence of an action's ongoing execution, not to mention a blind-eye toward the manifestation or consequences of an action.

Ignorance is an unavoidable consequence of interaction with an irrational reality – as it is impossible for an agent to possess comprehensive knowledge. An agent's intended interactions with reality always carry some degree of uncertainty (originating in the unending nature of action and the irrationality of action)<sup>61</sup> as to whether or not they will maintain conformity with deontological constraints.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, there is no way to "end" the execution of an act at some point with objective certainty – such a point reflects the interests of whomever determined it to be so. This brings one to the conclusion that the only truly sensible deontological act is inaction, if one is to have *certainly* that one has

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<sup>59</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 185-186; cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §109, §115; Knowles, 169.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §112; Knowles, 169-170.

<sup>61</sup> In that, the agent himself may be certain – subjectively certain - but that is a falsely held belief.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §117; Knowles, 171.

acted in accord with the even most basic deontological constraints.<sup>63</sup> That is, the only way to preserve one's intent logically (to maintain the intent to conform to deontological constraints with rational certainty) is by avoiding all action.

A further problem, as pointed to by Morgenthau's example of the conscientious objector or the Kantian truth-teller, is that deontological prescription results in a state of justice that is purely cognitive, given its cognitive and intentional focus and its artificial divorce between act and consequence.<sup>64</sup> That is the conscientious objector as an example of applied deontology that meets the above criterion – the act seems in accord with some basic deontological constraints. However, this too presupposes a divide between act and consequence, but of a different sort. While the objector is, in effect, acting ethically it only occurs from an agential perspective. Justice and ethics extend no further than this. Therefore, an agential perspective can jeopardize the ethics that the agent seeks to uphold. This may seem to be a tautological statement (i.e. the right of the agent violates the common good), but this is not the point here. Instead, it is that the right of the agent may paradoxically violate the agent's intended right – the conscientious objector's actions are intended to stop the war (there is an intended consequence as well as a deontological commitment – acts logically presuppose a consequence), but in fact, at best do nothing, but really perpetuate the war in that inaction. The agent's motivation to act, and the act consistent with deontological ethics, undermines the intention that led to the act itself.<sup>65</sup> This is analytically distinct from the person who will protect their right against the good. The only possible way to avoid the dilemma of the conscientious objector, for example, is a world in which everyone already behaves in conformity with (the same) deontological constraints.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 186. 188-189. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §119A; cf. Wood, 143 on Hegel, "The only way to keep your inner intentions free from the vagaries of good or bad fortune is to avoid acting at all..."

<sup>64</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 173-174

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §121A.

<sup>66</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 174. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §120.



The fourth point deals with the deontological aversion to moral dilemmas, that is, when two separate and contradictory deontological constraints confront one another.<sup>67</sup> SEP defines it as “the agent is required to do each of two (or more) actions; the agent can do each of the actions; but the agent cannot do both (or all) of the actions. The agent thus seems condemned to ethical failure; no matter what she does, she will do something wrong (or fail to do something that she ought to do).”<sup>68</sup> For example, imagine a circumstance like Kant’s: one must lie to not kill one’s friend (albeit, in Kant’s example this is indirect murder), but one cannot lie because it is proscribed and therefore one must decide which ethical constraint to violate. To make matters more difficult, because consequences (e.g. the greater good) are prohibited from consideration, the quality of the lie and the quality of the murder should be considered as ethically equal, according to deontological reasoning. Therefore, there is no logical criterion by which to prioritize what intuitively seems obvious. Morgenthau sees ethics as a navigation between these, where they can in fact both manifest as two deontological constraints.<sup>69</sup>

The fifth point Morgenthau raises is more a point about moral psychology and the difficult of reconciling a deontological ethic with the common aversion to theodicy and similar problems of evil. Namely, deontological ethics, in its prioritization of the right over the good), may result in injustice. A preventable series of events, with a predictable unjust outcome, is unpalatable for the masses. The result is that a deontological ethics that would result in a comparative injustice will have few followers, Weber’s chiliastic prophet will easily ensnare the masses with a consequentialist logic promising a justice that can be realized here on earth.<sup>70</sup> The masses, while buying into deontology in general, may have difficulty accepting a rigid deontology when it becomes controversial – as quoted above,

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<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 190. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §148R – where duties from different relationships arise and conflict in an irreconcilable manner.

<sup>68</sup> McConnell, Terrance. “Moral Dilemmas.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-dilemmas/>

<sup>69</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 190; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 110, 111. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 66, 68.

<sup>70</sup> Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills. (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1959), 122.

the maxim *fiat justitia, pereat mundus* is one that the majority will not accept.<sup>71</sup> However, the results of an empowered charismatic and popular consequentialist often result in something far divorced from any teleological state of justice.<sup>72</sup> This leads the discussion to Morgenthau's critique of consequentialism. Regardless, based on how hard Morgenthau comes down upon deontology, especially Kantian deontology, it does not seem likely that Morgenthau could support such a position in his own realist project.

### 3.0 Morgenthau's Critique of Consequentialism

Convention holds that Morgenthau was a consequentialist.<sup>73</sup> Again, based on what Morgenthau says, especially based on a conventional reading of *Politics among Nations*, this does seem to be the case. After all, he repeatedly refers to being concerned with consequences and not permitting the service of ethics or justice that comes at the expense of the world itself. However, moving before a reading of *Politics among Nations* to *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* leads one to a different conclusion. In *Scientific Man*, and unlike in *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau seems to be explicitly critical of consequentialism as well as deontology. This critique of consequentialism will be dealt with as deontology, by a systematically presentation of Morgenthau's critique of it, as well as supplementing what Morgenthau actually says with Hegel by logically drawing out fuller implications of Morgenthau's points. After this critique, the rather bizarre move of fully contradict himself less than ten years later by embracing consequentialism in *Politics among Nations* that Morgenthau seems to make will be investigated briefly. In comparing his reasons for rejecting consequentialism in *Scientific Man* with the allusions to consequentialism in *Politics among Nations*, however, one is not lead to believe that the points do not seem to be as mutually exclusive as an initial reading may suggest. Moreover,

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<sup>71</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 174. Cf. Wong, 400-401.

<sup>72</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 182.

<sup>73</sup> In this section, consequentialism is used as a blanket term to refer to any normative theory that prioritizes the good over the right, without regard to the scope that the good encompasses (beyond that this good is more than just the good of the agent himself). Whether Morgenthau is a strict consequentialist (and believes that the priority of the national good is in the best interest of all world citizens) or merely this restricted consequentialist, who applies consequentialist reasoning to a delimited community for other moral reasons, is not a question being addressed here. A critique of the priority of the good, at the heart of both of the possible theories, should render such a question unnecessary to ask.

Morgenthau's continued reasoning along these lines after all the various drafts of *Politics among Nations* has been published (e.g. *Truth and Power*, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, *Science: Servant or Master?*) further suggests that he did not abandon his critique of consequentialism, but that instead he was saying something that has since been misunderstood.

### 3.1 What Is Consequentialism? Was What Morgenthau Critiqued Consequentialism?

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes consequentialism succinctly as “the view that normative properties depend only on the consequences.”<sup>74</sup> This has been popularized as the simple maxim “the ends justify the means,” and alternatively, the ethical is the maximization of ‘the good.’ Thus, an action becomes good (or ethical) when the outcome is the best ‘good.’ This ultimate good to be realized is defined in terms of some foundational or ‘master’ value, such as utility, pleasure, or happiness; but what concerns the discussion here is not which of those foundational values is right but the reasoning to justify its pursuit. To quote a fellow scholar, to determine the ethics of some act one consults “the consequentialist instruction manual, which says the following: look at the consequences of the action (which may include the action itself), evaluate their goodness, and if you produced more good than bad, well, boy, you did a good thing (in some versions, if you did what produced more good than bad *than any other action you could have done* you did the right thing, otherwise you did the wrong thing).”<sup>75</sup>

Morgenthau does not use the term consequentialist in his writings.<sup>76</sup> The critique that he makes is of utilitarianism (sometimes he calls it instead utilitarian scientism, utilitarian realism (placing realism in quotation marks, pejoratively, to suggest it is not really “realism”), and social planning), which is the foundation of consequentialism, and his criticism does not seem to be specific to the utilitarian branch of consequentialist ethics. In addition, as utilitarianism was the original ‘consequentialist’ theory, its contemporary usage

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<sup>74</sup> Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter. “Consequentialism.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>

<sup>75</sup> Michele Bocchiola, quoted from conversation.

<sup>76</sup> As before, this dichotomy came about after he wrote on the subject.

seems to be based upon a theory's relation to the "important respects" of classical utilitarianism.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.2 Morgenthau's Critique of Consequentialism

Morgenthau's criticism of consequentialism is divided into three fundamental attitudes that are related but analytically distinct; these are Machiavellianism, the "Dual Standard," and "The Ends Justifies the Means."<sup>78</sup> Machiavellianism seems to be simply that political acts require no special ethical justification, politics is a special social sphere where actions are justified solely by their functionality (by their use in achieving a certain end).<sup>79</sup> Although Morgenthau too described this as amoral, it is clear that this is amoral only from the perspective of a deontological ethics. Machiavellianism is a results oriented, or pragmatic, approach to normativity, and according to the above analysis this is a type of consequentialist reasoning based on the priority of maximizing some good over the right. 'Proof' comes from his associating Hobbesian/Machiavellian amorality with the legal maxim *salus publica suprema lex*, or "the public welfare is the highest law" – which is not an amoral maxim at all, just one that is not deontological.<sup>80</sup> However, this consequentialist attitude is qualified beyond the public sphere by a private ethic that should be more in line with the deontological (legally formal) ethics discussed above.<sup>81</sup> The second category, "The Dual Standard," seems to be an unnecessary distinction made by Morgenthau, as far as I can tell, the point is to show that Machiavellianism holds this political consequentialism/private deontology divide as a permanent divide, whereas "The Dual Standard" holds politics as something yet to be fully rationalized (which is to say,

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<sup>77</sup> Of course, the dispute then becomes what those important respects are, and this can be quite controversial. Cf. Sinnott-Armstrong, "Consequentialism."

<sup>78</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 175-176. If it is at all unclear whether he is endorsing or rejecting these positions, consider p. 187 where after describing these amoral normative theories (as well as the "perfectionist" theory), he begins a new section, "The Corruption of Man," by saying "It is the common mark of all these attempts at solving the problem of political ethics that they try to create a harmony which the facts do not warrant." This is clearly a rejection of the preceding points based on factual (or real) limitations to them.

<sup>79</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176.

<sup>80</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176. This may be a misquotation of a line from Cicero's *De Legibus*: *salus populi suprema lex esto*, or 'the welfare of the people is the highest law' (quoted in Locke).

<sup>81</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176.

formalized as law).<sup>82</sup> Beyond this, it tries to minimize the role of politics in society because of that consequentialist attitude.<sup>83</sup> Beyond this, however, there does not seem to be much distinction. The final category, “The End Justifies the Means,” seems to be the most explicitly consequentialist of the three. He defines it “A good end must be sought for and an evil end must be avoided – in both cases regardless of the means employed.”<sup>84</sup> This sounds a lot like the definition provided above, taken from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. However, the ethics of “the end justifies the means” seems to have no distinction from the other three (in all cases, the results of the action have priority over whether the act conforms to a formal ethical law).

In the end, the primary distinction among these three categories does not seem to rest upon their attention to ethical detail, but to the way in which they obfuscate the ‘political’ issue that Morgenthau addresses in previous chapters of *Scientific Man*.<sup>85</sup> That is, all three categories adopt the same basic normative prescription: the consequences of the action (be it the abstract “end” or the public welfare) are granted normative priority. The distinction between the categories relies on how the sphere of politics is delimited in relation to non-political spheres (such as private action). For Machiavellians, consequentialism is a necessary effect of politics.<sup>86</sup> For the Dual Standard, consequentialism is a result of the undesirable politics, which will become rationalized eventually.<sup>87</sup> The Dual Standard seems to hinge on the notion that the rule of law (or similar deontological constraints) can operate within a border, but in international relations the rule of law has no place. Morgenthau takes this issue up again in *Politics among Nations* and qualifies the difference between domestic and international politics not as typological, but as qualitative.<sup>88</sup> For Means/Ends

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<sup>82</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 179.

<sup>83</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 180.

<sup>84</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 181.

<sup>85</sup> Namely chapters II through IV, pp. 11-121, of *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. This is especially the case with chapter III: “The Repudiation of Politics,” (pp. 41-74).

<sup>86</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176.

<sup>87</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 179.

<sup>88</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3-4; cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 55. Despite this rejection in both *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* and *Politics among Nations*, Wong (pp. 406-408) concludes that Morgenthau was secretly advocating “the dual standard” as his normative theory. However, “the dual standard” is untenable because 1. Deontology in one’s private life cannot work unless one avoids action altogether (abstains from any potentially evil consequences – see above); 2. Consequentialism in

rationality, consequentialism, like for the Machiavellians, seems to be a necessary effect of politics.<sup>89</sup> Because there the distinction between these categories does not seem to be along the lines of their normative theorizing (all are similarly consequentialist in their approaches) and these types do not seem to be mutually exclusive in international relations theory, they will be equated under the generic term consequentialism to clarify the argument. The conclusion, thus, is that, despite analytic distinctions, the subject of Morgenthau's critique here are some aspects of consequentialist ethics.

To return to the initial definition of consequentialism, a maximized good (the quality of the end) overrules consideration of the means used to achieve that good – the consequences are the determination of an act's ethicality. Morgenthau does not seem to be agreeing with this.<sup>90</sup> He has several critiques, which again seem to be Hegelian in nature (drawn from Hegel's critique of act/ethical reasoning this time), that preclude the possibility of consequentialist reasoning from his realism. These Hegelian points are significantly supported by his (Weberian) critique of social science made earlier in the book. Briefly, these are:

1. The only legitimate end is the end of history/the ultimate human good. There is no break from an action in reality but its effects continue indefinitely (until they arrive to this ultimate end point).<sup>91</sup>

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political life is untenable (see below); 3. There is no logical reason for a division between political and private actions, following on the fact that all types of actions can be subjected to moral (read, deontological) scrutiny; the division Morgenthau points to, instead, is that the statesman has an explicit deontological obligation of responsibility for the political unit, beyond other deontological considerations, which results in severe moral dilemmas. Thus, there is nothing about "political action" that makes it intrinsically un-deontological whatsoever. Instead, "political action" involves

<sup>89</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 181.

<sup>90</sup> I will withhold references to *Politics among Nations* (and any possible controversies that would derive from it) until the next section, where it will be addressed exclusively.

<sup>91</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 185. As will become even more apparent below, this critique of consequentialism, that once realized an act carries on indefinitely, has strong affinity with Arendt's theory of action in *The Human Condition*, 230-236. This must be coincidence, and most likely comes from their similar backgrounds and a reading of Hegel and Weber. Regardless, it is noteworthy that this specific point (presumably against consequentialism (such as Stalin and Hitler) was raised by both authors).

2. Therefore, any end, besides the end of history, is a terminal point only in the mind of an agent. Any delimitation of “a consequence” is related to the intentionality of the agent – what the agent would will to be the final consequence of their action.<sup>92</sup>
3. Given the above, means/ends relations besides the end of history (and an unmoved mover) are perspectival, and ethical reasoning presented in this way is a rationalization of the interests of the agent, rather than an objective assessment of ethical worth (the subjectivity is moved to a second order level).<sup>93</sup>
4. Mono-causal/mono-consequential reasoning, linear reasoning, of consequentialism, is an idealization of the actual processes of causation that occur in social reality – it does not reflect social reality as such (thus it misses actual consequences and causes in its reasoning).<sup>94</sup>
5. Quantitative analysis presupposes objective measurements of and objective relations among qualities; at minimum this is highly controversial.<sup>95</sup>
6. Foregoing ethical evaluation of action and considering only the good to be realized, e.g. as the political amorality versus private morality distinction holds, is as unpalatable for mass psychology as the deontological “*fiat justitia, pereat mundus*” is.<sup>96</sup>
7. Consequentialism, as normative (prescriptive) theory, presupposes the success of an action in justifying otherwise unjust acts for “the good.” However, social prediction is uncertain and effectively a gamble – if the consequences are not realized/not realizable, then consequentialism is rather bizarre ethical reasoning.<sup>97</sup>

The first four criticisms all revolve around issues of social causality. The first point is that, because actions and so-called consequences do not occur within a vacuum, because the ethical decisions one decides upon will occur in the world, the effects of an action continue on past any end-point.<sup>98</sup> Acting effects a permanent change in the world that may diminish

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<sup>92</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129, 184. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 68

<sup>93</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141, 183-184.

<sup>94</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127-128, 129.

<sup>95</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141, 183.

<sup>96</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176, 178-180.

<sup>97</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 130, 135, 136, 139 183-184.

<sup>98</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 184.

with time (and as other act-induced changes accumulate on “it”), but is nevertheless a lasting effect. Therefore, with the exception of some terminal point like “the end of history,” no so-called consequence is really the ultimate consequence of an act. The consequence by which one justifies an act will have further consequences from that same act (without any further intervention by the actor), not to mention become the cause of (or the act for) other, independent “consequences” – and these subsequent consequences, according to the consequentialist logic, should have some impact on the justificability of the original act. However, because the consequences continue on indefinitely, the possibility of justification of the original act logically should be suspended until the act absolutely terminates at that ‘end of history.’ However, the end of history is so abstract as to justify almost any action (especially given causal indeterminacy in planning, this issue comes to the fore; there is great difficulty in showing that an act will definitely result in either preventing or realizing the common good). Thus, while the good that happens at end of history is the only absolute consequence, it does not make much sense as a means to legitimate ethically an action (or serve as an ethical end).

This, however, does not seem to be what consequentialists typically mean by their theory (with the exception of a very few Hegelian-type consequentialists, perhaps). This leads to Morgenthau’s second point. Consequentialists posit consequent justification “points” that are not (or better, that precede) the absolute consequence/outcome of that action. He calls the logical divide between act and consequences-realized an “artificial and partial” relationship.<sup>99</sup> It is so for two reasons: the first is the natural conclusion from the above point: any consequence drawn that is not equal to the absolute consequence is only an artificial consequence – it is a point on a causal chain that continues in both directions.<sup>100</sup> The second reason is that this artificial consequence is drawn from the perspective of the judge determining its nature as “the” consequence by which the act in question can be

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<sup>99</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 183; cf. Bain, William. “Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered.” *Review of International Studies*. (2000, 26), 454 for a discussion of related points. It should be obvious, at this point, that any valid delimitation of act and consequence (not to mention the “good”) rests upon a value-free orientation that is not attainable in the social sciences. For an elaboration, see Bain, 453-454, 457.

<sup>100</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129, 184; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 70. cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §122.



ethically legitimated. That is, the determination of the artificial consequence is partial, or perspectival according to the agent judging it to be ethically worthy, in the words of Will Bain, “[a determination of this sort] obliges us to be situated inside the world.”<sup>101</sup> The problem with such a position is primarily that such determination lacks sufficient objectivity to be ethically legitimate.

Third, following upon the partial nature of the determination of “the” consequence of an act, the separation of act and consequence is dependent, ultimately, on the intentions and interests of the agent making the determination of what the consequences shall be that should be pursued.<sup>102</sup> That is, the interests of the agent are the basis upon which the good is selected and upon which actions are deemed justifiable. Of course, this is not presented in purely egoistic terms (rationalization would be difficult or impossible), but as a partial delimitation of what those ends are, consequentialism is necessarily a function of the interests of the consequentialist judging a situation and the action appropriate to realizing the good.<sup>103</sup>

The final criticism of consequentialism related to issues of causality deals with linear and manifold causation, and the (necessary?) tendency of consequentialism to reduce consequential causation sequences to linear constructs. This can be reduced to two separate points on the idealization of causal chains:

- In the construction of consequences and acts, a single cause or act, or a single linear chain of causes or acts, is considered in the consequence at hand.<sup>104</sup> Social reality is actually a manifold (possibly infinite) number of causes operating in a web (rather than linear causal progressions) that produces any artificially posited consequence.<sup>105</sup> The problem that this creates is that, if justification is reduced to a

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<sup>101</sup> Bain, 457; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 183-184; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 64, 68, 69. cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §120.

<sup>102</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 166-167, 183. Cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 36, 118. Again, for a broader elaboration on Morgenthau and the difficulties of objectivity in the social sciences, see Bain, 453-454.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §108, §108A, §123, §123R; Knowles, 178

<sup>104</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127, 149.

<sup>105</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 128-129.

single act, when in fact several acts, some necessarily external (initially unrelated) to the act being justified, contribute to the formation of the “consequence” at hand, it risks obscuring and even validating acts that were marginally necessary for the consequence that justifies them.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, due to this manifold nature, it presupposes the impossibility of alternative causal relations in realizing the consequence (alternative courses that would demand less “sacrifice” for the good consequence to be had).<sup>107</sup>

- In the construction of consequences and acts, a single consequence or end is considered in the consequence at hand.<sup>108</sup> That is, aside from the artificiality of the consequence posited, there is another side problem that only one consequence is considered in the ethical legitimation of the act. Social reality actually results in a manifold (possibly infinite) number of consequences also operating in a web (rather than linear causal progressions) results from the act being justified, which renders justification of the act through its consequences seriously more difficult (and perhaps impossible) when considering the manifold consequences from the act at hand.<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps banal, Morgenthau next criticizes the notion of maximizing a quality at the expense of some other quality: “There is no objective standard by which to compare two kinds of happiness or of misery or the happiness of one man with the misery of another.”<sup>110</sup> This relates back to a Weberian point that there is no Archimedean point from which one can evaluate social life, including values themselves with objective certainty. Moreover, to render this into some fungible system would only aggravate the problem of objectivity. A move to quantify qualities would reflect the pre-philosophical biases (including those subjective evaluations of value hierarchies) in the result. Moreover, as in the above section on deontology, such a move (pre)supposes that there are no such things as moral dilemmas

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §119, §119A; Knowles, 174

<sup>107</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 128.

<sup>108</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127, 129.

<sup>109</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §122; Knowles, 174

<sup>110</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 183. Cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 27; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 66

where two qualities are of equal value (the consequence and the act that sacrifices something for its realization).

Similar to the above section on deontology, consequentialism in a rigid formulation tends to be unpalatable to the masses because it entails actions that are unpalatable no matter what the good to be had may be (relating again to the above difficulty in the fungibility of values).<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the delimitation between political amorality (or consequentialism and private morality (deontology) that Morgenthau points to, which characterizes at least the categories of Machiavellianism and “The Dual Standard,” rests upon a categorical distinction between “politics” and “not-politics” that is artificial (both are equally realms of human interaction), and untenable.<sup>112</sup>

The final criticism is that consequentialism, if it is to justify and prescribe action (and be more than a historical rationalization of acts that succeeded in realizing some good), must necessarily presuppose the future success of a given act that is otherwise unjustifiable (it must presuppose that the action will be able to be justified by the realization of the good it seeks to realize).<sup>113</sup> Consequentialism necessarily presupposes a rational certainty, as control, in acting to realize something, but social science prediction is not possible, with rational certainty, for many reasons.<sup>114</sup> Briefly put, anomalous individual behavior is a significant variable in the social sciences that undermines rational certainty in planning; human nature is irrational to a certain extent.<sup>115</sup> Nature, although rationalizable as an idealization, is not rational; nature (as an entity without any will or determinate behavior) is not rationally, aside from the human beings who inhabit it.<sup>116</sup> Finally, only from a historical perspective does history present itself as a \*necessary\* causal structure (events that necessarily produce this outcome) – an observation of events unfolded allows a causally

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<sup>111</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176.

<sup>112</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 178-180

<sup>113</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 130, 135, 136, 139, 183-184. Cf. Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 237. Cf. Arendt, Hannah. *Crises of the Republic*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 12, 37-38.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 100.

<sup>115</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 138-140, 144. As above, this claim about human nature will be developed in the following chapter.

<sup>116</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 131, 151, 172.

necessary vantage; but an agential perspective cannot yield this (and thus a consequentialist prescription lacks the causal necessity it needs for the certainty of its justification) because history is not necessary until it has become real.<sup>117</sup>

### 3.2 Resolving Confusion Caused by *Politics among Nations*' Third Principle

Against the above critique, it is plausible that realists who are consequentialists may cite Morgenthau's third principle from *Politics among Nations* to show that Morgenthau was, in fact, actually a consequentialist in his most important work (or at least that Morgenthau was confused on whether consequentialism was a legitimate principle or not). There are reasons to believe such, he writes things such as, "Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states..."<sup>118</sup> These have been interpreted by various authors to mean that Morgenthau was saying that realism was a theory about consequentialism – that deontological side-constraints had no normative relevance because they could jeopardize the state's pursuit of the good.<sup>119</sup> This is partially true – Morgenthau is clearly not endorsing a strict deontological position in this passage. However, the logical leap to consequentialism is not at all apparent when one considers the principles in toto. Regardless of this, the above interpretation has not met with much contestation, either from realism's proponents or realism's detractors.

However, this interpretation is based on one sentence from the principle, thus taken out of context. Although it is reasonable that one quotation can represent an entire principle, reading the rest of the text does not support this claim in this case. Despite a seeming contradiction presented by his claims in *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau is not endorsing consequentialism. And this can be shown with reference only to that particular text. The complete sentence, from which the common amoral reading is taken, reads is "Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete

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<sup>117</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 149, 183. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Preface, §115, §115R, §115A. Cf. Arendt, Hannah. *Willing*. In *The Life of the Mind*. (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1978), 39-51.

<sup>118</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 10

<sup>119</sup> Following the above correction amorality is altered to consequentialism. Cf. Donnelly, 7, 11; Wrightson, 357; Freyberg-Inan, 67; Tickner, 432-433; Pin-Fat, 230-231.

circumstances of time and place.”<sup>120</sup> The omission changes the character of the quotation significantly. The first reads that universal moral principles have no place in state action, period, and is completely consistent with the typical assumption about realism that it prescribes to states amorality in their political actions. The second does not. Moreover, including the full sentence makes it significantly more difficult to represent Morgenthau as the “evil amoral theorist” that detractors have sought to characterize him as. The second sentence reads that universal moral principles (constraints) have relevant place in state action, but that there is some further act necessary to make them so (i.e. abstract principles are missing something, and that is interpretation into concrete circumstances). A qualification of this he adds in “The Problem of the National Interest” explains it even further – is that general adherence is not only normative, but factual (because of that normativity), but rigid adherence to such constraints is reckless, especially in international politics: greater considerations may demand violating deontological principles.

Such a claim is supported with further references to the paragraph. He further states that judgment of actions, to determine their consistency with moral law, is an imperative (“Both individual and state must judge political action by universal moral principles.”<sup>121</sup>), restating the relevance of ethical judgment, and act as consistent with ethical constraints as possible, to politics. However, he does seem to make some contradictory statements later on, stating that “political ethics judges action by its political consequences.”<sup>122</sup> That is, by judging actions only by their outcomes, realism is stating that an a priori judgment of action from side-constraints is inappropriate for political ethical. However, as already noted, he also states that those deontological constraints can be applied to action – just with the ambiguous qualification that they ought to be filtered according to context. This ambiguity seems to be furthered by Morgenthau’s appeals to Weber’s “ethics of responsibility,” which comes from “Politics as a Vocation,” which Weber ends with a vague endorsement of neither strict consequentialism nor deontology. Thus, one seems to be left hanging when trying to understand to what Morgenthau is pointing in ethics.

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<sup>120</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12. Reiterated in Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 108

<sup>121</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12.

To allude to what is to come, these statements need to be read in conjunction with his simultaneous emphasis on limits – limits of knowledge (in terms of both assessment and prediction) and limits of capacity to control that he presents as objections to both normative theories. Moreover, combined with Morgenthau’s stress on moderation is his emphasis in this principle on filtering, which can be read to imply something different than consequentialism: *phronesis* in the Aristotelian sense. This claim is backed by his references to the virtue of prudence – the “consideration of the consequences of seemingly moral action” which is to say that prudence considers the consequences of actions that are deontologically ethical. The argument, to be later presented, is that the correct reading of this fourth principle is to interpret it as a foundation of the realist ethic as virtue ethics, and, of course, the classical political virtues are *phronesis* and moderation, virtues with which Morgenthau completely agrees.

#### **4.0 Rejecting Deontology and Consequentialism**

While the reference to *Politics among Nations* does not clarify much about what Morgenthau was positively saying. It leaves a strong ambiguity – Morgenthau’s critique seems to endorse a bit of consequentialism, a bit of deontology, but ultimately rejects them both as comprehensive theories. Lebow and Williams were right, in part, in their respective and contradictory assessments – Morgenthau seems at times to be a limited consequentialist (focused on the Weberian “Ethics of Responsibility,” which is ambiguous in Weber as to how strong it should play a role in decision-makers’ normative theories) and, pace Kant, he seems at times to be a deontologist.<sup>123</sup> Williams’ highlighting of Morgenthau’s concerns about the possibility of objective knowledge in social science – that absence of an Archimedean point – seems to correspond exactly with what Morgenthau was getting at: that consequentialist logic is severely limited because it presupposes exactly such a point

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<sup>123</sup> It may be noteworthy that deontology corresponds well to both liberalism and the rule of law, while consequentialism to “Realpolitik” and *raison d’état* – to be even more analytic, one could say that the divide between deontology and consequentialism tends to represent the moral considerations as held by lawyers and philosophers versus political theorists and political leaders, respectively. Significantly, Morgenthau was all of those, and seemed to be simultaneously embracing and rejecting both. Cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95-96.

when it is, in fact, without it, and thus must limit itself with an awareness of the imprecision of any prescription a consequentialist ethics may impose.<sup>124</sup>

It may be possible to be more analytical in classifying Morgenthau however. While a strictly “intentional” deontology has its own problems, the majority of consequentialist and deontological ethics would seem to have to stand up to the critique of the distinction between ‘the act’ and ‘the consequence(s).’ Morgenthau’s most abstract point here seems to be that such a division is senseless and risks making ethics more disputably subjective than it does to come up with a proper ethics. Against the distinction, the very nature of actually acting is to affect a consequence – to cause something that would not happen without that act, and thus change reality. These consequences (which are the factual side constraints on the “act” beyond the intended actualization of the act) suffer the same problem of ambiguity that calculations to maximize good consequences have.<sup>125</sup> As above, the problem is that such a subjective ethics does normatively empower those with political power to rationalize their self-interested ends as something more.

Based on the critiques outlined above, it seems quite clear that he is rather difficult to classify as either a consequentialist or deontologist. Morgenthau himself is vague on the outcome, stating that “[Realism] weighs these principles [that is, abstractly formulated universal moral principles – deontological constraints] against the moral requirements of concrete political action, their relative merits to be decided by a prudent evaluation of the political consequences to which they are likely to lead.”<sup>126</sup> That is, Morgenthau says that neither deontological nor consequentialist logic has primacy, but that these normative theories instead must be evaluated according to further criteria. Neither is acceptable as a normative theory *without qualification*. Thus, the strongest aspect of both Williams and Lebow is that Morgenthau employs a second order criterion for determining whether or not

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<sup>124</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95-97, 102.

<sup>125</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 184, cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §118R, §120; Knowles, 171-173.

<sup>126</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 111

deontological constraints should be upheld or whether a consequentialist end can overrule them.<sup>127</sup> Regardless, neither is scientific, neither is law.

However, this conclusion leaves little space for progression. There are other possibilities, however. A potential start is to follow Hegel – if it is the case that Morgenthau had an eye to Hegel in his critique of deontology and consequentialism, then he should either embrace Hegel’s conclusion of objective spirit, which would seal the breach between consequentialism and deontology by making them the same<sup>128</sup> or he should reject Hegel’s conclusion and find another way.

#### 4.1 Departing from Hegel

Although Hegel was a useful instrument to bring out the critique of ethics that Morgenthau makes in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, Hegel also adopts some controversial assumptions that preclude the possibility of embracing Hegel’s positive solution to ethics. Likely following Weber, Morgenthau repeatedly makes an explicit endorsement of methodological individualism.<sup>129</sup> If the above analysis is correct and Morgenthau was making his criticism with an eye toward Hegel’s similar criticism, it is interesting that Morgenthau finishes his critique of deontology and consequentialism with a statement of methodological individualism. This occurs after the most explicit rejection of those two normative theories in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*.

Morgenthau rightly argues that any opposition between individual and society is artificial, shorthand for something more complicated occurring; regardless, “It is always the individual who acts... The action of society, of the nation, or of any other collectivity, political or otherwise, as such has no empirical existence at all. What empirically exists are

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<sup>127</sup> This ambiguity is also pointed to by Bain – justification of Vietnam, although based upon the vague national interest that is typically consequentialist, was done vis-à-vis the intrinsic moral value of human life and moral principle (deontological constraints); Bain, 460-461

<sup>128</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §130; Knowles, 179.

<sup>129</sup> See the discussion about this in Chapter One. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 117-118, 246; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 187; “Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen,” 4-5. Cf. Koskenniemi, 448-449, 454.



always the actions of individuals...”<sup>130</sup> That is, entities such as state, society, or any other abstract collective “being” *is-not* – it is an amalgamation of individual actions with a collective intent. Morgenthau will make similar points in *Politics among Nations*, and *Politics in the Twentieth Century*.<sup>131</sup> Thus, to speak of something like an objective spirit or a *volonté générale* is what Morgenthau would later decry as “bad metaphysics.”<sup>132</sup> This would also hold for neo-realist metaphysical projections of “state nature” – states have no “nature,” there are only individual, human actions (consistent with human nature) with a mind to or intention of preserving that idea of the state.

By making claims such as these, Morgenthau endorses a position generally attributed to Weber known as methodological individualism. It is defined as “social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors”; this is neither motivated by a concern with individual atomism nor an attempt to reduce social phenomena to individual psychological functions, ‘a social’ is affirmed, but it is to guard against the fallacious postulation of a purpose without a purposive actor or inferring fallacies about the dynamics of collective action.<sup>133</sup> Methodological individualism is not attempting to forward a thesis that only the individual in se matters – perceptions of the social, as well as sociability of individuals, are vital to the constitution of an individual. However, this social is an abstraction or generalization of an individual’s perception of other individuals, known and unknown, values and expectations of him.

Morgenthau’s move here is to distance himself from positions, such as Hegel’s, which would seek to posit a non-empirical metaphysical entity, such as objective spirit, ‘society,’ or an invisible hand, which is able to operate “behind the backs” of individuals and drive them toward some end regardless of their individual wills. Thus, Morgenthau’s critique of

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<sup>130</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 187.

<sup>131</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 117-118, 246; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 8, 15, 69

<sup>132</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Evil of Power.” *The Review of Metaphysics*. (1950, 12.3), 515; available in Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Restoration of American Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1099.

<sup>133</sup> Heath, Joseph. “Methodological Individualism.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/methodological-individualism/>.

ethics precludes a further teleological conclusion such as Hegel's philosophy of history. Of course, this move also has implications for the relationship between politics, ethics, and human nature, since it obviously implies that human nature plays a role in ethics because all action is reducible to individuals (and, by extension, their nature). As Morgenthau simply puts it, "Social forces are the product of human nature in action."<sup>134</sup> Thus, determining what ethics are, and conforming to it cannot be a matter of making the 'rational as real;' relying on a rational ethics that functions behind the backs of historical agents. Practical ethical guidelines that have value must have some roots in human nature, which is not to say that it is determined by behavior (as natural law), but that it is reflective of the real limits and real possibilities of human action and human judgment of how to act.

## **5.0 Scientism and Ethics – Bringing in Human Nature**

The rejection of consequentialism and deontology Morgenthau makes, here articulated through a parallel reading of Hegel, goes no further than this negative correlation because of Morgenthau's adoption of Weberian methodological individualism – Morgenthau cannot advocate an agent above the individual controlling humanity's fate. Regardless, he agrees with the above reading of Hegel in that both consequentialism and deontology are untenable because they are universal, rule-based normative theories at heart (even if they manifest this in different manners),<sup>135</sup> they hold that their axiomatic normative prescriptions hold regardless of time and place. However, the possibility of applying these universal prescriptions to reality, setting aside the above objections inherent to the normative theories themselves, rests upon the human agent applying them. Thus, both consequentialism and deontology rely on some assumptions about human agency – namely the capacity of human agents to follow the prescriptions of either normative theory and the capacity of human agents to properly apply them to reality.

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<sup>134</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 8; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 254

<sup>135</sup> For further discussion on how they are rule-based, see Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §138, §138A, §138R, §148R; Knowles, 209. "In morality, Hegel sees a tendency toward casuistry, an attempt to bring every decision under rules and principles. The emptiness of moral standing means that this attempt is ultimately doomed to failure" (Wood, 175).

It seems that consequentialism and deontology are both products of some similar assumptions - that the relevant ethical aspects of human nature are identical across all humans, and this yields self-interested individuals capable of using reason to achieve whatever those interests may be posited to be. This is an idealization of the already idealized atomistic individualism of social contract theorizing, both reduce individuals to self-interest without any further relations – the only obligations that arise are out of fear, desire, and insecurity, based on rational self-interest.<sup>136</sup> This type of human nature is sometimes (pejoratively) called *homo economicus* because of its original preponderance in economic theory and philosophy.<sup>137</sup> From the abstract universal laws of behavior *homo economicus* (as the rational self-interested individual) permits, both consequentialism and deontology are able to formulate scientific rules of normative interaction, because the agent from which it derives these laws (and for whom it prescribes these laws) is equally scientifically reducible.<sup>138</sup> Normative theories are an attempt to provide guidelines for human behavior, an attempt to provide direction toward the just, however that may be construed. But, if it is to provide significant guidance on how to act and react to humans, it must have an awareness of what human nature is.<sup>139</sup> Scientism holds that human nature is reducible to simple or even monistic characteristics. As Benjamin Wong neatly summarizes the problem, “all [the above] attempts to reconcile morality with politics fail ultimately because they are predicated on the belief that man is rational and that rationality is intrinsically good. That is to say all these attempts presuppose that man is in principle morally perfectible.”<sup>140</sup> There is reason to suspect that such an outlook on human nature as a root for such an ethics is deeply flawed, however, and this will be addressed in the next chapter.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche*, 75.

<sup>137</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche*, 40, 72.

<sup>138</sup> Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, 216; Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, 23.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 331; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 125.

<sup>140</sup> Wong, 402.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §148R §150, Sen, Amartya. “Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. (1977, 6.4); Dupré, John. *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Putnam, Hilary. *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002); And, of course, Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (among other works).

### III: Morgenthau's Critique of Human Nature

#### Moving beyond Scientific Man, or *Homo Economicus*

The purely economic man is close to being a social moron. Economic theory has been much preoccupied with this rational fool decked in the glory of his one all-purpose ordering... The puzzle from the point of view of rational behavior lies in the fact that in actual situations people often do not follow the selfish strategy. Real life example of this type of behavior in complex circumstances are well known, but even in controlled experiments in laboratory conditions people playing the Prisoners' Dilemma frequently do the unselfish thing.

– Sen

Politics must be understood through reason, yet it is not in reason that it finds its model.

- Morgenthau

This chapter will present a critique of “scientific man,” a theory of human nature deriving in part from economic theory, as the critique was made by Hans Morgenthau. Although Morgenthau is explicitly critical of scientific man, especially in his foundational work *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, little attention has been devoted to understanding what it was exactly that he was critiquing and what implications this critique might have for his broader realist project. The particular importance of understanding his critique of scientific man comes from his broader critique of scientism in the social sciences.

Morgenthau is a methodological individualist.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a critique of ‘scientific man,’ or *homo economicus*, will have strong implications for all social science: if human agents are not reducible to scientific behavioral laws, then social science *writ large* – which is nothing more than the study of the coordinated actions of human agents – is not reducible to scientific laws either.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One for a discussion of this, but briefly methodological individualism holds that social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors; this is neither motivated by a concern with individual atomism nor an attempt to reduce social phenomena to individual psychological functions, ‘a social’ is affirmed, but it is to guard against the fallacious postulation of a purpose without a purposive actor or inferring fallacies about the dynamics of collective action.

The accepted interpretation for Morgenthau's account of human nature is that it was a scientific theory – the opposite of what this chapter aims to demonstrate. Part of the reason for this seems to be Morgenthau's own fault – his critiques are never explicit nor are they analytical, and moreover he does not seem to have a clear target in mind when he makes them. More specifically, his discussion of human nature is unsystematic and oftentimes confusing. On the other hand, the fault of his critiques to make their target fully visible does not seem to justify interpreters of Morgenthau to draw the opposite conclusion: that he endorsed “scientific man.” This conclusion may come about from an anachronistic reading of Waltz' neo-realism, which does adopt a scientific human nature.<sup>2</sup>

By showing that Morgenthau is critiquing, rather than endorsing, ‘scientific man,’ then this chapter will have a triple significance: one of historical value and two of theoretical value. The first, historical points, is to show that this chapter will show that not only have many interpretations of Morgenthau been wrong in their reading of him, but that these criticisms were actually concurring with Morgenthau, in that Morgenthau was making the same critique of rational choice theory that contemporary authors now attempt to use against, and perhaps his critique even offers some lessons they could learn from for their own critiques of political theories relying on rational choice agency. The second will be to show that the theory of human nature at the root of realism – that a scientific account of behavior is untenable. By discussing what is wrong with a scientific conception of human nature, this chapter will lay direction for a positive account of human nature, which will be taken up in the following chapter. Finally, this critique will link Morgenthau's critique into a broader argument against rational choice theory, taking place in contemporary normative philosophy and social theory. It will show that Morgenthau's approach to human nature was on the correct side of a debate that continues today. To that extent, Morgenthau's critique can be read as an early vanguard for the current debates in analytic philosophy about scientism in human nature and the debates in economics about the accuracy and utility of rational choice theory. Originally a device from neo-classical economics, it has

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<sup>2</sup> Guzzini, Stefano. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 187; Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*. (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 1099

since come to serve as a guideline for idealized human behavior in virtually every field dealing with human behavior;<sup>3</sup> it is used to predict what humans ought to do, will do, and would do if they really thought hard about things (did not succumb to irrational impulses). Besides its persistence in economics, it found its way into, for example, international relations theory through the neo-realist logic of state action and analytic philosophy has really taken to it, first adopted probably by Utilitarian philosophers, it was then taken by Rawls who applied it to his simultaneously moral, legal and political project of liberalism – and thus prompted the current generation of analytic philosophers to follow suit in adopting this device.

To do this, first, this chapter will situate outline the contemporary understanding of what Morgenthau endorsed as a theory of human nature – that is, the scientific account. Second, what exactly ‘scientific man’ is will be addressed. Morgenthau’s own assessment will be used as a road map, and it will be expanded upon by reference to contemporary theory, rational choice theory and game theory. Finally, Morgenthau’s critique of scientific man will be drawn out, and its points will be drawn out logically by reference to contemporary arguments.

## 1.0 Morgenthau’s Critics

Morgenthau’s conception of human nature is typically presented as a simple theory of rational agency. For example, in J. Ann Tickner’s well-known feminist reformulation of Morgenthau’s political realism, she presents an articulate and concise version the typical understanding of realism in its “stress [of] the rational, objective, and unemotional” and states that realism is an attempt to recreate political science from “a model of the natural sciences.”<sup>4</sup> The interpreters’ emphasis on the role of rationality in Morgenthau’s approach

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<sup>3</sup> Cook, Karen Schweers and Margaret Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Tickner, J. Ann. “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. (1988, 17.3), 431.

politics seems to be both normative and explanatory or predictive, although not every author emphasizes both of these.

Interpreters who imply Morgenthau's rationality is explanatory or predictive believe that states or decision-makers will exhibit rational choice behavior – and the ends that determine this behavior are either from an attempt to maximize power (however that may be defined) or self-interest (however that may be defined), and these agents are always largely or wholly immoral (that is, they have no concern for the well-being of other agents if it comes at a significant expense to their own pursuit of power or self-interest.<sup>5</sup> These agents are, thus, reducible to a single feature (e.g. rationality, egoism, or the *animus dominandi*), which allows some relevant degree of predictability and understanding in how they act and react in international relations.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Morgenthau's realism allows for both explanations and predictions of behavior of states or decision-makers on the international level through its reduction of human nature to this primary component that drives this “instrumentally rational” agent.

The above behavior is scientific *law* (as rationalist determinism) of agents in international politics. Therefore, the conclusion, that a decision-maker must pursue power, is a law of politics that is obeyed – one's “interest” in politics is only the pursuit of power. This

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<sup>5</sup> Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-10, 47; Tickner, 431-433; Freyberg-Inan, Annette. *What Moves Man*. (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 68, 78, 82-83, 86, 91; Tellis, Ashley J. “Reconstructing Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 40, 42; Wrightson, Patricia S. “Morality, Realism, and Foreign Affairs: A Normative Realist Approach.” In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 358, 385; Thayer, Bradley A. “Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism, and International Politics.” *International Security*. (2000, 25.2), 128-129; Pin-Fat Véronique. “The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the Mysticism of the Nation-State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau.” *Review of International Studies*. (2005, 31), 223, 224, 226; Legro, Jeffrey W. and Andrew Moravcsik. “Is Anybody still a Realist?” *International Security*. (1999, 24.2), 6, 12; Johnson, Thomas J. “The Idea of Power Politics: The Sophistic Foundations of Realism.” *Security Studies*. (1995, 5.2), 241; Molloy, Sean. “Truth, Power, Theory: Hans Morgenthau's Formulation of Realism.” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. (2004, 15), 18-19.

The distinction, here, being amorality is a lack of concern for morality while immorality is the recognition of morality but the breaking of its norms because of other concerns. Power-hungry agents don't care about morality, whereas insecure agents care more about their survival than the moral code which they would uphold if not for the overriding concern.

<sup>6</sup> Donnelly, 9-10; Pin-Fat, 223; Barkawi, Tarak. “Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau, and Modern Strategic Studies.” *Review of International Studies*. (1998, 24.2), 162, 174; Tellis, 40-42; Thayer, 125, 128-129; Freyberg-Inan, 68, 78, 91; Tickner, 431;

interpretation stems, in part, from the traditional interpretation of Morgenthau as a positivist, empiricist, or scientist in terms of epistemology, and attempts to derive scientific laws of politics, most famously in his *Politics among Nations* (but also in some of his legal works).<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, Morgenthau's theory of human nature in politics can become normative in what it reveals about how agents behave. If other agents are power-seeking or self-interested **and** are largely immoral, then to survive (the most basic command of morality) one must behave as they do even if one wishes to behave differently; It would be irrational to behave otherwise in a system where everyone else is out behaving as such – and it is “scientifically” established as Morgenthau claims, or at least interpreters of Morgenthau claim he claimed.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Morgenthau's realism is the normative command to decision-makers and foreign policy planners that states ought to behave immorally and self-interestedly and that they ought to seek power if they even want to survive in international relations. This conclusion follows *logically* from the above statement about human nature. Thus, even if interpreters of Morgenthau's realism purport that it is to be understood only as an *explanatory* theory, it carries a normative statement within it based on these facts about how human beings and states behave. Thus, if interpreters are right and Morgenthau's theory of human nature is reducible to a type of instrumentally rational, and immoral, pursuit of power or “self-interest” then Morgenthau's realism is both explanatory and normative.

## 2.0 Morgenthau's Conception of Scientific Man

Morgenthau identifies scientific man as a product of rationalism, which believes the world to be governed by laws accessible to human reason and seeks to discover those rational processes for prediction and control.<sup>9</sup> The character of these laws is ontological, in the

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<sup>7</sup> Guzzini, Stefano. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 38; Freyberg-Inan, 70-71, 91.

<sup>8</sup> Tickner, 432; Freyberg-Inan, 64-65, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 3, 11.



sense that, as a property of being, they are consistent.<sup>10</sup> This is to say, that, given the proper conditions, human beings will consistently behave consistently with already observed patterns that have been explained as resulting from or arising from certain ‘causes.’ In the realm of human nature, this ‘rationalism,’ too, seeks to reduce and understand a human being to its basic laws – which is to understand the rational behavior of man.<sup>11</sup>

1. Scientific man is perfectly rational; biology and spirituality, or “irrational” conditions of human agency, can be ignored in behavior (except, possibly, as preference determinants);<sup>12</sup>
2. Scientific man is instrumentally rational, in that it bases actions on most efficient pursuit toward those harmonized motivations;<sup>13</sup>
3. Scientific man has a transparent self, which is to say that it has perfect knowledge of its motivations or preferences, and those motivations are in harmony (they can be ordered hierarchically);<sup>14</sup>
4. Scientific man is egoistic;<sup>15</sup>
5. Scientific man can objectively perceive its environment (social “facts”);<sup>16</sup>
6. Scientific man can be used as a normative ideal for behavior; because of its overruling rationality, it can determine the most normative behavior under any circumstances;<sup>17</sup>
7. Scientific man’s is, in fact, scientific, in that its behavior conforms with scientific method’s dictates (repeatability, causal understandings, and formalization);<sup>18</sup>
8. The scientific man is universal – all humans are capable of being scientific man.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 5, 13, 15, 18, 122, 129, 154, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 154-156, 160, 211; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations (Sixth Edition)*. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168; it is not entirely clear that Morgenthau attributes this to scientific man, what is clear is that Morgenthau believes that humanity’s social/moral behavior is obscured by scientism – a critique I take to suggest implicitly that, in Morgenthau’s understanding, scientism is advocating that actions are only motivated by egoism.

<sup>16</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141-145, 149-152, 162-167.

<sup>17</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 13-14, 17-19, 154

<sup>18</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 136-138.

In sum, Morgenthau's idea of scientific man is that it is a device of the social sciences of a rational agent actor, who is capable of representing an idealized version of the real behavior of any human for both normative and predictive purposes.

## 2.1 Scientific Man Today

Scientific Man is a term that is no longer in circulation. However, a similar "being" has taken root in many contemporary social science fields, including politics, international relations, sociology, psychology, economics, law, and even philosophy.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, this device is considered to be the most valuable for analysts today – both for its predictive capacity and its normative utility. Although originally a device of neo-classical economics, it has found its way into almost all realms of social science. For example, in political theory, it is used by Neo-Realism to understand and predict the behavior of states, as well as dictate what states ought to do, by granting them rational agency and Hobbesian nature.<sup>21</sup> It is also used heavily in contemporary analytic philosophy. Although originally a utilitarian device, John Rawls' adaptation of it against them made the device famous for deontological theory and now it pervades almost all normative philosophy on the analytic side.

Because of the diversity of the fields, in which this type of analysis is applied, there is a diversity of terms referring to this phenomenon, including economic man, rational (choice) actor, public choice theory, rational choice theory, and game theory. In addition, John Dupré's calls this being *homo economicus* and Amartya Sen adopted the pejorative "rational fool." Regardless of the name for the agent adopted, its characteristics are relevantly the same and will be spelled out below. For the sake of reading ease, this agent will be called *homo economicus*. When compared to what Morgenthau was describing, *homo economicus* and scientific man share many of the similar features. The features of the contemporary debate are consistently the following:

### 1. *Homo economicus is rational*

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<sup>19</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 13, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Cook and Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1099.

- a. It acts from *instrumental rationality* calculations (it can maximize utility).<sup>22</sup>
  - b. It has a set of *ordered preferences* – or *its self is transparent* in that it is aware of and can act according to its ordered motivations – and this self and its preferences are sufficiently static.<sup>23</sup>
  - c. *Irrational/unrational behavior is negligible* for studying and predicting its behavior, as well as for normatively determining its behavior. This is because it possesses *self-control*.<sup>24</sup>
  - d. *Its rationality is normative* (it self-dictates how it ought to behave).<sup>25</sup>
2. Homo economicus is *egoistic* (or *self-interested* or *individualistic*) – those preferences it acts upon are always considered with reference to the agent's individual interests alone (as opposed to some transcendental interest like society, god, etc.), which arise from its revealed preferences.<sup>26</sup>
  3. Homo economicus has *perfect information of its environment* – it can decide with the best possible information on how to achieve its preferences; certainty of facts is assumed (future outcomes can be uncertain).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ross, Don. "Game Theory." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2006). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-theory/> Section 2.2; Green, Donald P. and Ian Shapiro. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Application in Political Science*. (London: Yale University Press, 1994), 12, 14, 30;

<sup>23</sup> Ross, "Game Theory."; Sen, Amartya. "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. (1977, 6.4), 322-323; Sen, Amartya. "Internal Consistency of Choice." *Econometrica*. (1993, 61.3), 497-499; Putnam, Hilary. *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002), 50, 80; Green and Shapiro, 12, 14, 30; Elster, Jon. "When Rationality Fails." (in Cook, and Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*), 27-28; Brennan, Geoffrey. "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" (in Cook, and Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*), 53; Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman. "Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions." (in Cook, and Levi (Eds.). *The Limits of Rationality*), 62-63.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, "Game Theory."; Sen, "Rational Fools," 340; Putnam, 80-81; Green and Shapiro, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Verbeek, Bruno and Christopher Morris. "Game Theory and Ethics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2004). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-ethics/> Section 4; Putnam, 17; Cook and Levi, *The Limits of Rationality*, 15; Elster, "When Rationality Fails," 19.

<sup>26</sup> Sen, "Rational Fools," 324; Sen, Amartya. "The Formulation of Rational Choice." *The American Economic Review*, (1994, 84.2), 389; Sen, Amartya. "Behavior and the Concept of Preference." *Economica*, New Series. (1973, 40.159), 252-253; Sen, "Internal Consistency of Choice," 503; Putnam, 49; Green and Shapiro, 13, 16, 30; Brennan, "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" 53.

<sup>27</sup> Ross, "Game Theory."; Kahneman, Daniel. "Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics." *The American Economic Review*. (2003, 93.5), 1452, 1454; Putnam, 102-103; "Green and Shapiro, 13, 30; Ross, Don. "Game Theory."; Elster, "When Rationality Fails," 28; Tversky and Kahneman, "Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions," 65-66.

4. *Homo economicus obeys law-like patterns of behavior* owing to its inherent and overriding rationality; *homo economicus*/rational choice theory is linked to scientific method (as a “deductive nomological conception of explanation,” it produces axioms of human behavior<sup>28</sup>). Jon Elster provides a reasonable definition of what constitutes scientific method, which is to what *homo economicus* must conform, if it is to be a valuable predictive and explanatory device: Scientific Method entails: 1. Formalization (the axioms are general, not particular); 2. Causality (the axioms can be understood by if/then formulae); 3. Repeatability, or *ceteris paribus*<sup>29</sup>, (human agents will consistently behave according to the axiom, given relevantly similar conditions).<sup>30</sup>
- Thus, analysis of *homo economicus* produces “law like claims about measureable phenomena” that can be used to “develop theories that can explain and predict observed patterns of behavior and practice”;<sup>31</sup> *homo economicus* allows for determinant conclusions about the behavior of human agents.

Based on these simple criteria, *homo economicus* as the device with which to analyze and predict real human behavior, has been the “most important and most useful tool in the analysts’ kit” for social understanding and prediction.<sup>32</sup> Beyond factual circumstances, normative theory has adopted *homo economicus* as its idealized device to determine what real agents, affixed certain preferences, in real circumstances ought to do.<sup>33</sup> *Homo economicus* serves as an idealization of both factual and normative human behavior. From this, it entails a further essential feature:

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This is not always the case, however, and some game theory does deal with imperfect information. Cf. Ross, “Game Theory.”

<sup>28</sup> Green and Shapiro, 30; Elster, “When Rationality Fails,” 24.

<sup>29</sup> Dupré, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Elster, “When Rationality Fails,” 24.

<sup>31</sup> Cook and Levi, 15; Elster, “When Rationality Fails,” 19, 23; Ferejohn, John. “Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Election in Early Stuart England.” *The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action*. Ed. Kristen Renwick Monroe. (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 280; Quoted from Green and Shapiro, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ross, “Game Theory,” Section 1.

<sup>33</sup> Verbeek, Bruno and Christopher Morris. “Game Theory and Ethics.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2004). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-ethics/> Section 4.

5. *Homo economicus* is *universal* – any human being is effectively (in the sense that it does not lose its essential humanity) reducible to it; humans are relevantly homogenous in their interests and behavior.<sup>34</sup> – Otherwise *homo economicus* would be useless as an analytical device.

*Homo economicus* represents what any and every human being would most likely (or should) do. Thus, human anthropology (or human ontology) is not relevantly different when we arrive to the most important determining factors of human behavior – having discovered *homo economicus*, one essentially is granted the Rosetta stone of human behavior for all social science. Finally, outside of the agent's determination of its ordered preferences,<sup>35</sup> any human agent will not have any will – the rational pursuit of the most-preferred outcome by *homo economicus* does not permit a will to do otherwise if *homo economicus* is to have analytical value. In other words, once the parameters of *homo economicus* are set, it cannot violate them without rendering itself useless as an analytical device.

As a device, *homo economicus* popularity comes from its power. It is desirable for those who seek to make social 'science' because it allows for a formalization of human behavior, it allows for predictability, even certitude of and control over what a human or humans will do under certain hypothetical conditions. Certainty of human behavior and its dispositionality (how it will behave toward others) entails scientific knowledge of it. And this type of knowledge extends beyond predictability into control. If one is aware of what something will do under any circumstances, then one is able to adapt conditions to affect that thing's own behavior. Beyond its power as a device, *homo economicus* confirms a basic normative assumption at the heart of the Christian/Kantian Western tradition of morality, which is to posit equality before god, moral capacity, and/or the law. *Homo economicus*, as a idealization of any human agent, confirms exactly this notion of equality. Moreover, it also reveals that morality is within the reach of everyone – God and heaven are not beyond anyone's grasp.

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<sup>34</sup> Green and Shapiro, 17; Elster, "When Rationality Fails," 41; Brennan, "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" 53.

<sup>35</sup> In some cases, the requirements of application demands that even preferences are predetermined.

However, not one of these premises of *homo economicus* is factually correct. *Homo economicus* does not idealize human behavior, or better, it idealizes the human being out of the device. And this completely undermines its reliability to serve as either a normative representation of a human being or a reliable predictor of actual human action.

### **3.0 Critiquing *Homo Economicus***

This section will proceed by providing first Morgenthau's explicit critique of the various fundamental assumptions of *homo economicus*. These critiques will be elaborated on and then supplemented with more contemporary arguments that better develop the critiques Morgenthau provides by drawing his points out logically further than he did. Although the supplementary arguments adopted were in no way endorsed by Morgenthau, they are completely consistent with what he does explicitly say and, more importantly, his general line of argumentation against scientific man and the general phenomenon of science's colonization of the social.

To briefly outline what is below, Morgenthau and contemporary critics analyze the following characteristics of *homo economicus*: the irrelevance of irrationality for behavioral considerations; the reducibility of agency to egoistic/self-interested concerns; self-control of *homo economicus*; the transparency of the self; the presence of perfect knowledge of an agent's environment; the universality of *homo economicus*; the scientific nature of *homo economicus*. They conclude that none of the above conclusions about human behavior from *homo economicus* are correct:

1. Rationality is more robust than just instrumental rationality. In addition, Irrationality is relevant for evaluating and predicting human behavior; humans are *pathological*: emotions affect one's ability to follow the dictates of reason;
2. Motivations are not reducible to rational self-interest (egoism); they are motivated by *transcendent concerns*, such as society and morality, as well as egoistic concerns;
3. Humans do not have perfect self-control and are not entirely "free," but are *causally determined* both by real environmental and physical factors;

4. The self is *intransparent*: preferences and motivations are not perfectly known and, accordingly, they cannot be made into a hierarchy or system of ordered preferences;
5. Humans are perspectivalism, insufficient information forces decisions to be made in uncertainty;
6. No universal human can be abstracted – human beings are relevantly *heterogeneous* and defy reductionist attempts;
7. *Humans are unscientific* – human behavior is not reducible to law-like axioms.

### 3.1 The Primacy of Rationality and the Irrelevance of the Irrational

The rationality granted to *homo economicus* is only in the determination of how to pursue a certain set of preferences that are assumed from the beginning, and usually universally attributed. This is to say that, although *homo economicus* has the capacity to ideally select how to go about obtaining a certain preference (and to do so in compliance with the ordered preferences accorded to it), *homo economicus* is totally incapable of rationally deliberating about the nature of those preferences or reassigning value according to external reasons (such as particular conditions, changing preferences, or other possible dilemmas). Instead, Morgenthau follows Weber and attributes to human nature a more robust type of rationality. This includes instrumental rationality, but instrumental rationality is not the central type of reasoning. Instead, Morgenthau outlines a typology<sup>36</sup> of reason:

1. “Creating harmony among several conflicting irrational impulses.” This is to say that this type of reason creates coherence among drives. Although the drives themselves may lack any meaningful orientation, since they are drives there is no a priori coherence and some harmony (as hierarchy) needs to be established among them.
2. “Bringing ends and means into harmony with irrational impulses.” This seems to be an attempt to create a sort of coherence among drives and values (i.e. affections which would compete with rationally considered ends).

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<sup>36</sup> All four points are drawn from Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 157-158.

3. “Establishing harmony among several conflicting ends.” This type of reason is a sort of value coherence. It differs from (1) because it deals with making coherent one’s aims (ideals and values), rather than making coherent one’s drives.
4. “Bringing means into harmony with ends.” This is most in line with Weber’s *Zweckrational* (instrumental rationality) – this type of reason determines the most efficient way in which to realize those drives, without any regard to what there are or their value.

It is clear already that rational interests (as *Zweckrational*) presuppose some sort of ethical commitment (as *Wertrational*, or value rationality).<sup>37</sup> Reason, thus, fulfills a much broader role in human behavior, in that agents also use it to determine the value of the ends that are sought and use it to reconcile and harmonize ends that may require conflicting means – and this is something that *homo economicus* is forced to ignore because its ends are forced upon.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, however, and drawing upon Hume, Morgenthau attacks the idea of a purely rational agent (or a rationally self-interested agent); such a notion is simply “to leave the field to the stronger irrational forces which reason will serve.”<sup>39</sup> That is, the revealed preferences of *homo economicus* are not derived from strictly rationality, however it is construed, but also from other sources, which rationality guides.<sup>40</sup> Morgenthau lists two supplemental sources for human behavior: interests and emotions (or spirit and biology).<sup>41</sup> In this scheme, rationality does not dominate over interests and emotions except as a Platonic ideal (but even then according to Plato, rationality’s role is one of coordination, not exclusion, of the appetites and spirit).<sup>42</sup> Moreover, this scheme is also similar to

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<sup>37</sup> Lebow, Richard Ned. *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 364.

<sup>38</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 158. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 194.

<sup>39</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 155.

<sup>40</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 154; Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95, 110, 123, 183.

<sup>41</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 211, 5; he never refers to the *animus dominandi* in *Politics among Nations*, instead he has a similar concept called “bio-psychology” (Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 39).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Frei, Christoph. *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 104-105, 124-126, 199-200. Gismondi, Mark. “Tragedy, Realism, and



Freud's own scheme of human nature (id, ego, and super-ego), someone with whose work Morgenthau was well-acquainted.<sup>43</sup> Importantly, specific interests and emotions manifest differently among individuals – no human being is identical in the degree to which specific interests and emotions affect them. As Morgenthau says succinctly “men are in different ways governed by their passions.”<sup>44</sup> Different individual temperaments (be it called passions, drives, the id, or *epithumiôn* (appetites)) result in different behavior in relevantly identical circumstances. Morgenthau's Freudian influenced non-hierarchical nature of drives leads to a motivational account of human action that cannot be rationalized, that cannot be erected into a theory of rational choice.<sup>45</sup> Thus, while rationality may be common among human beings, the irrationality of being human is relevant for considering behavioral response to circumstances and it is inconsistent. This is shown by how Morgenthau qualifies his analysis of reason with the statement “regardless of what the inner logic of abstract reason would require.”<sup>46</sup> This is a very curious statement to make, and seems to suggest that Morgenthau wants to avoid the discussion altogether of whether or not ‘objective’ reasoning exists – that is, Morgenthau's critique is of reasoning is that although there is an inner abstract logic, it is pathological in the classical sense of *pathos*. Thus, not only does *homo economicus* miss the broader sense of reason, but its obsession with instrumental reason also blinds it to the role that pathos plays in affecting instrumental reasoning; therefore, *homo economicus* simultaneously has been granted too little and too great a rational capacity, depending on how one looks at it.<sup>47</sup>

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Postmodernity: *Kulturpessimismus* in the Theories of Max Weber, E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger.” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. (2004, 15.3). 455, 456.

<sup>43</sup> Frei, 126; Koskenniemi, Martti. *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 444, 448-454; Scheuerman, William. “Realism and the Left: The Case of Hans J. Morgenthau.” *Review of International Studies*. (2008, 34), 46-47, 51; Cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. *Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen der Menschen*. (Frankfurt, unpublished manuscript, 1931; HJM-B151, Library of Congress) and Morgenthau, Hans J. *Der Selbstmord mit gutem Gewissen. Zur Kritik des Pazifismus und der neuen deutschen Kriegsphilosophie*. (Frankfurt, unpublished manuscript, 1931; HJM-B96, Library of Congress).

<sup>44</sup> Lang Jr., Anthony. *Political Theory and International Affairs: Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*. (Westport: Praeger Paperback, 2004), 1099, (44-47); Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Science: Servant or Master?*. (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1972), 26.

<sup>45</sup> Koskenniemi, 449.

<sup>46</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 155.

<sup>47</sup> I'm indebted to Mike Williams for helping me to draw out the essence of this section on rationality and for helping me to better articulate the points I make in it.

Beyond the irrationality of behavior, even *homo economicus* is permitted some degree of irrationality - the determination of the preferences is usually subjective. Then instrumental rationality is the determinant of the means to those ends. How does *homo economicus* delimit its irrational faculties to merely that instance of ends selection? Although this delimitation may make sense in the static conditions of a thought experiment or laboratory, the delimitation of the irrational faculties from the rational ones begins to lose its validity as soon as ends and means begin to overlap in a complex environment. As discussed in the previous chapter, one's 'end' is actually an arbitrary conceptual delimitation – that is, there are very few absolute ends in an agent's life, many “ends” are actually simultaneously means to other ends (or means that are actually temporary ends).<sup>48</sup> In terms of an agent's consideration of one end at one time makes little sense in the framework of its entire life. Moreover, those few absolute ends will be affected by the quotidian “mean-ends” that arise as a result of other rational calculations and the un-delimitable constraints of irrational preferences and interests informed by self and social variables.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, rationality can be and is misrepresented by the agent's themselves. This depends on the adoption of the agential perspective versus the historical perspective.<sup>50</sup> What appears, historically, as a rational decision-making process resulting in a calculated outcome can originate in an agents unreflective and irrational motivations, of which they were unaware until the outcome was made apparent.<sup>51</sup> That is, it is an ideological rationalization of an otherwise irrational process and a serendipitous outcome for that particular rationalization.<sup>52</sup> This also has implications for the transparency of the self-thesis treated below.

Finally, the rational pursuit of those ends can also be hampered by the pathos of human being that is pointed to in the presence of emotions and interests (or biology and

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<sup>48</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129, 141, 183-184; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 64, 68, 69, 70.

<sup>49</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 158.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *Willing*. In *The Life of the Mind*. (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1978), 28-31, 39-51, 140, 153-156.

<sup>51</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 149-152.

<sup>52</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 71-74; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 101-103.

psychology) alongside rationality. A human being is cannot be reduced to an entity that functions solely on rationality; human beings cannot be abstracted out of their physicality without discarding what constitutes human nature altogether; unfortunately, this includes pathological aspects of human nature that interfere and belie its rational functioning.<sup>53</sup> Put succinctly, “interests and emotions interfere with rational judgment.”<sup>54</sup> He describes the failure of the will in a later article, stating “We know what we ought to do, and we want to do it; but we cannot.”<sup>55</sup> This phenomenon is called *akrasia*, or weakness of the will, in classical philosophy; which is a phenomenon that is familiar to many critics of rational choice theory.<sup>56</sup> Two quotations from Morgenthau are suggestive of the two types of *akrasia* described by Aristotle: *propeteia* (impulsiveness) and *astheneia* (weakness).<sup>57</sup> In the first, Morgenthau says, “Man is likely to act according to his interests and emotions even though his [rational] knowledge of social causation suggests to him a different course.”<sup>58</sup> That is, the agent has deliberated upon and arrived to rational course but acts otherwise – this is *propeteia*. “Irrational impulses, interests and emotions, may become so powerful that they refuse to be led by reason...thus, passion shakes off the control of reason and man becomes a predominantly irrational being.”<sup>59</sup> That is, the agent is overwhelmed by passion and does not even attempt to use reason to act – this is *astheneia*. In conclusion, biology and emotions affect and can even overwhelm rationality. “Irrationality” is central to any accurate reflection of human nature, and *homo economicus* misses this completely.

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<sup>53</sup> Warren, 130; a dualism between self and body, a target of Nietzschean philosophy, is exactly what this seeks to critique: “To the despisers of the body will I speak my work. I wish them neither to learn afresh, nor teach anew, but only to bid farewell to their own bodies, - and thus be dumb. “Body am I, and soul” – so saith the child. And why should one not speak like children? But the awakened one, the knowing one, saith: “Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body.” Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: First Part*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed./Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1982), 146. Cf. Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 162.

<sup>54</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 211.

<sup>55</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “On Trying to be Just.” *Commentary*. (1963, 35.5), 422.

<sup>56</sup> Sen, “Rational Fools,” 340. Cf. Elster, “When Rationality Fails,” 39.

<sup>57</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terrence Irwin (Indianapolis; Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), VII.1-10 (p. 1099). Cf. Kraut, Richard. “Aristotle’s Ethics.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>

<sup>58</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 211.

<sup>59</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 156.

### 3.2 Rational Self-Interest (Egoism) and Transcendent Concerns

Besides the focus on the instrumental rationality of *homo economicus*, to the detriment of humanity's 'irrational' faculties, there is a corollary: rationally pursued interests are solipsistic considerations; an agent's interests are without reference to other agents or transcendental factors (such as society, god, or morality). Agents are treated as abstract individuals behaving with reference solely to their own self-interests. Here, rationality and egoism are coupled, and sometimes even conflated.<sup>60</sup> Of course, this facet of *homo economicus* rests on several factors: the presence of socialized restrictions must be, and can be, omitted so *homo economicus* has its broadest utility (particular mores, as a function of a particular society, will obviously not be ingrained in every agent) and the notion of agency, adopted by neo-classical economic theory (from where the contemporary *homo economicus* derives), is informed by classical liberalism's abstract individual.<sup>61</sup>

Against this, Morgenthau states that there is a definitive moral facet of human behavior. "[Man] reflects and renders judgments on its nature and value [of man's social world] and on the nature and value of his social actions and of his existence in society. In brief, man is also a moral being."<sup>62</sup> What Morgenthau is pointing to is that human behavior is conditioned also by transcendent concerns – that is, human behavior accounts for other agents and transcendental concerns, such as justice and society; concerns that are not reducible to some form of individual preference.<sup>63</sup> Humans are genuinely preoccupied with justifying and limiting the degree to which one is able to exercise one's will over another, abstractly and concretely.<sup>64</sup> But this concern with limits is compelled by external constraints – normativity is a socialized concern, not something springing from or reducible to purely individualistic preference.<sup>65</sup> Also, importantly, although human nature is morally

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<sup>60</sup> Sen, "Rational Fools," 323; Putnam, 49-51; Brennan, "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" 55.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95.

<sup>62</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168. Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 177; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 18; Morgenthau, Hans J. "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil." *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1945, 56.2), 5; Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Decline of Democratic Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press 1962), 130.

<sup>63</sup> Dupré, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168-169.

<sup>65</sup> Dupré, 97, cf. Dupré 95-98.

motivated, Morgenthau is also not so naïve as to suggest that egoism does not play any role in behavior: what makes human nature and morality such a controversial subject is exactly the interplay between egoistic decision-making and ‘altruistic’ decision-making.<sup>66</sup> And *homo economicus* misses this completely.

In addition, the social confirmation sought is not universal, but a function of the particular social mores in which an agent exists. A culture instills certain qualities in its constituent agents through its *relative* valuations.<sup>67</sup> Behavior is, in part, a function of the historical and social conditions of an agent in question, and these create and inculcate norms of behavior in an agent’s psychology as the agent is socialized according to those conditions.<sup>68</sup> Not only do emotions and interests, as conditions inherent to the self, affect and differentiate human behavior, but there is also an external, second-order determining principle at work: societal mores. That is, human beings are constituted by the world around them – in particular, their social world.<sup>69</sup> Morgenthau insists that “human conduct must be understood in historical, social, and cultural context.”<sup>70</sup> As much as human beings are political agents, that agency is configured by different societies. Therefore, as well as there being biological and psychological differentiation, there is also societal differentiation which also results in different behavior among agents.<sup>71</sup> This is important because it means that rational self-interested behavior is wrong also on account of the fact that individuals do not conceive of what is rationally permissible equally.

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<sup>66</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 191-192, 196, 209. Cf. Sen, “Rational Fools,” 342; Sen, “The Formulation of Rational Choice,” 389; Sen, “Internal Consistency of Choice,” 503.

<sup>67</sup> His wording here, “certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in another.” Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), 134.

<sup>68</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law.” *The American Journal of International Law*. (1940, 34.2), 273-274; Morgenthau, Hans J. *La Réalité des Normes, en Particulier des Normes du Droit International; Fondements d’une Théorie des Normes*. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934), 11-14; Bain, William. “Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered.” *Review of International Studies*. (2000, 26), 446.

<sup>69</sup> Shilliam, Robert. “Morgenthau in Context: German Backwardness, German Intellectuals, and the Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project.” *European Journal of International Relations*. (2007, 13.3), 303-304.

<sup>70</sup> Bain, 446; Molloy, 4-5.

<sup>71</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Twilight of International Morality.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1948, 58.2), 80.

In speculating on the source of transcendent motivations, Morgenthau reiterates Aristotle's assessment of humans as 'political animals,' to which Morgenthau adds that it is "true forever."<sup>72</sup> Aristotle's political naturalism means simply that an abstract, atomistic individual is insufficient to exist or sustain itself; the grander structure provided by society is necessary for individuals and "it is "natural" in the extended sense that it arises from human natural inclinations (to live in communities) for the sake of human natural ends."<sup>73</sup> Humanity's political nature occurs for three reasons:<sup>74</sup>

1. It is naturally occurring through reproduction and the education and rearing of children
2. Speech, as an individual ability, is naturally social (and allows/compels morality to enter into individual consideration;
3. Individuals in society cannot function apart from it (therefore, social institutions precede individuals);

Speech, or language, is central to this in particular, because it something without which the human mind cannot function.<sup>75</sup> Speech is necessary in order to form the concepts and representations about the world.<sup>76</sup> Yet speech is a social and normative faculty of human being, speech only arises from the social group of which an individual is a part.<sup>77</sup> Individual insufficiency therefore implies that individuals are incapable of conceptualizing the world around them without their preexisting, socially granted faculty of speech. Because human behavior is determined to some extent by how an agent represents and

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<sup>72</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220; Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*, 1099. This is echoed by Amartya Sen when he describes "man is also a social animal" – an individual's decision-making transcends self interest and leads to enforced norms of behavior that run contrary to self-interest in the name of society (Sen, "Behavior and the Concept of Preference," 252-254); cf. Dupré, 37, 92, 181-182

<sup>73</sup> For an elaboration, see Miller, Fred. "Aristotle's Political Theory." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2002). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/supplement3.html>, part of the article at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>.

<sup>74</sup> All three reasons derived from Fred Miller's "Political Naturalism"; supplement to "Aristotle's Political Theory."

<sup>75</sup> Dupré, 29, 34-35.

<sup>76</sup> Dupré, 33.

<sup>77</sup> Dupré, 34-37.

understands their environment, social nature must be a relevant consideration of human nature.<sup>78</sup>

To the above, Morgenthau adds, probably inspired by Hegel, an important condition arising from humanity's social nature is that human beings need and seek *recognition* from peers. "The individual seeks confirmation, on the part of his fellows, of the evaluation he puts upon himself...what others think about us is as important as what we actually are."<sup>79</sup> Thus, recognition is a hermeneutic concept, which demands an individual transcend one's solipsistic considerations of future actions and attempt to understand oneself from the perspective of the others. Agent's predictions of social reception are confirmed by actual valuations of that agent by others. Thus, there is already a basic sociability and political interest at the heart of human being that compels considerations beyond rationally pursued abstract self-interest. And this is confirmed by actual social experimentation and analysis. In the words of Amartya Sen, "But the puzzle from the point of view of rational behavior lies in the fact that in actual situations people often do not follow the selfish strategy. Real life examples of this type of behavior in complex circumstances are well known, but even in controlled experiments in laboratory conditions people playing the Prisoner's Dilemma frequently do the unselfish thing."<sup>80</sup>

The notion of an abstract, self-interested individual does not make sense when confronted with the reality that no individual comes into existence without being socialized from birth and that, because of this, there is a social mechanism at play in every agent's mind, shaping considerations of behavior. In addition, there is no one social mechanism, but multiple sets of mores that operate differently, thereby resulting in different behavior of agents. Therefore, the abstract individuality and the egoism of *homo economicus* neglect a vital facet of human nature. To do human nature justice, society must be considered as a facet of it distinct from features arising from within an individual; that is, society is a "second" source of human nature

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<sup>78</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220; Dupré, 37.

<sup>79</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 78, 86-100, 113; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 197-198. Cf. Brennan, "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" 53.

<sup>80</sup> Sen, "Rational Fools," 341.

### 3.3 The Presence of Self-Control and Freedom of Action

From the above two sections, there are two general constraints on the free will of an individual. The exact nature of these emotions, interests, and societal affectations interfering with individual behavior is something that Morgenthau does not delve into deeply. However, for the purpose here it is enough to understand that he does accept that emotions and societal constraints can overrule the rational course of action (subjectively and objectively). Passions are an ever-present aspect of human behavior; they interfere with and even overrule rationality.<sup>81</sup> Social mores are ingrained behavior but can be struggled against and overcome, however this is not something easily accomplished; cultures, while more malleable than one's physical nature, are still external constraints on behavior that are resistant to absolutely unqualified action.<sup>82</sup>

These point to a barrier to one's self-control; individuals' dispositions are determined, to some extent, at birth and over the course of development by their biology, their psychology, and how they are socialized.<sup>83</sup> This means that human behavior is not infinitely malleable, even according to ends like those dictated by rational self-interest.<sup>84</sup> From biology and psychology, the fact that passions can dominate the self means that action, however rationalized, may be a product of irrational forces, rather than reason. "Reason is carried by the irrational forces of interest and emotion to where those forces want it to move, regardless of what the inner logic of abstract reason would require."<sup>85</sup> Therefore, *insofar* as those irrational forces determine action, the will is unfree. On the side of societal affectations, the social conditions into which one first finds knowledge empirically and second within the socialized context in which one is able to interpret empirical data. In describing the effect of social pressures on the social scientist's ability to do political science, Morgenthau describes a condition that holds for any human being: social

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<sup>81</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 156, 211.

<sup>82</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168-169, 191-192, 196, 209.

<sup>83</sup> Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*, 1099 (44-47).

<sup>84</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), 3. This is not exhaustive, neither should it be considered exactly what Morgenthau was referring to when he criticized 'liberalism' for assuming an infinite malleability of human nature.

<sup>85</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 155.



conditioning affects, not necessarily determining however, the interpretation of facts.<sup>86</sup> The horizons for possible free action are significantly constrained by societal conditioning as well as biological conditions.

Thus, Morgenthau's position on biological and social limitations logical entails that his conception of human nature is affected by what can be called *causal determinism*; causal determinism is when "for any individual substance (e.g. a person or some other living organism) that substance has "essential" properties that causally primary with respect to the future history of that substance, i.e. they non-trivially determine the space of possible trajectories for that substance."<sup>87</sup> This conclusion drawn by Morgenthau sounds similar in many ways to Sen's own conclusion about human behavior when he discusses externalities constraining behavior, of which the agent may be unaware of but responding to nonetheless.<sup>88</sup> In sum, pure reasoned action and the will are overruled, somewhat, by fate of temporal and geographical circumstances, genetics, and one's own developmental history. The possibilities for acting reflect the innumerable causes which have led up to the situation in which one finds his or her self with the possibility to choose.<sup>89</sup> In other words, rational self-interest, as one's ability to choose and order preferences with unqualified freedom, is compromised by both one's physical, spiritual, and societal circumstances. However, this is not to state that the self is absolutely determined by them, just that there are meaningful and relevant constraints on the will.

### 3.4 The Transparency of the Self

Much of what is critiqued above stands upon a more fundamental assumption – that is, unqualified rationality, self-control, and rationally accessible self-interest seem to spring out of a more fundamental assumption of a transparent self (or, an agent's objective

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<sup>86</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 164. cf. Bain, 457. Morgenthau, Hans J. "Thought and Action in Politics." *Social Research*. (1971, 38.4), 159-160. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141-145, 162-167.

<sup>87</sup> Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 83; Leiter actually calls this "causal essentialism"; but I have renamed it for my purposes. Leiter denies the will altogether as a conclusion from his approach of scientific naturalism; Morgenthau, in contrast, allows for some freedom of the will.

<sup>88</sup> Sen, "Behavior and the Concept of Preference," 252-253; Sen, "The Formulation of Rational Choice," 387-388, 389; cf. Sen, "Liberty and Social Choice." *The Journal of Philosophy*. (1983, 80.1), 21, 22.

<sup>89</sup> Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 133.

knowledge of their subjectively determined ordered preferences), which the absence of would render those claims irrelevant to the defense of *homo economicus*, if they were not already shown to be bad assumptions. The possibility of ordering preferences rests perfect fulfillment of the famous etching into the Temple of Apollo at Delphi: γνωθι σεαυτόν, or know thyself. It is only with perfect knowledge of the self and by what it is motivated can any ordering of its preferences be attempted. However, this possibility of a transparent self is generally an a priori one in *homo economicus* literature; yet there it was with good reason that the normative virtue “know thyself” was etched into the temple walls. Moreover, the ordering of preferences is really feasible only in simple circumstances with a psychologically minimal being; complexity can create uncertainty and becomes demanding on the mental faculties of the agent – yet this is what reality presents to human agents and thus what constructs need to reflect.<sup>90</sup> The a priori imposition of transparency is a highly controversial assumption to be made without any serious investigation.<sup>91</sup>

Morgenthau explicitly criticizes the notion of a transparent self. His most significant passage relaying this comes from *Politics among Nations*, where in the Second Principle of Realism he warns about motives, both the search for motives and certain ‘knowledge’ of them once found. From the role of passions in the self and the absence of self-control, and this is that the self is not fully transparent. This means that averred intent (as well as rationalized intent) is not necessarily the underlying reason for a particular action. In a quotation reminiscent of Nietzsche’s *Daybreak*,<sup>92</sup> Morgenthau states,

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<sup>90</sup> Brennan, “Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?” 53.

<sup>91</sup> Sen, “Internal Consistency of Choice.” 498.

<sup>92</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Daybreak*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Aphorisms 116 (“The primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, how human action is brought about... I know what I want, what I have done, I am free and responsible for it, I hold others responsible, I can call by its name every moral possibility and every inner motion which precedes action; you may act as you will – in this matter I understand myself and understand you all!... [In reality, however, there is a terrible truth, that] no amount of knowledge about an act *ever* suffices to ensure its performance, that the space between knowledge and action has never yet been bridged even in one single instance? Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be!”) and 119 (“However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counter play among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him.”)

To search for the value to foreign policy exclusively in the motives of statesmen is both futile and deceptive. It is futile because motives are the most illusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by the interests and the emotions of the actor and observer alike. Do we really know what our own motives are? And what do we know of the motives of others?<sup>93</sup>

Interests and emotions obscure motives – which is to say that a rational approach to self-knowledge is obscured by the irrational (or unrational) aspects of the self, which are themselves products of the bio-psychological drives inherent to first nature. Thus, absolute self-knowledge is not possible; one cannot be certain of one's future reactions to conditions.<sup>94</sup> Pathologies of self-knowledge means, in turn, that rationally directed action is not absolutely the case either – hence Morgenthau's caution against basing politics upon the avowed or observed motivations of others.

In the end, "rational" activities may even be rationalizations of motivations of the self of which one is not entirely sure; the reasons one provides to oneself to justify an act may not actually be the reasons for acting in the first place.<sup>95</sup> Referring back to Morgenthau's knowledge and adaptation of Freud's own work on human nature,<sup>96</sup> this intransparency of the self bears remarkable similarity to Freud's unconscious mind – a similar aspect of the self of which we know little about and have little control over. The consequence is that actions undertaken may not correspond to any ordered preferences if one does not know what one's true motivations are and this lack of knowledge will effectively comprise other's abilities to act in coordination with an agent.<sup>97</sup> To paraphrase Morgenthau, the light of reason meets with significant, relevant difficulty in penetrating the 'darkness of the soul' – delimiting the boundaries of reasoned social knowledge.<sup>98</sup>

Sen pushes this even further by suggesting that the transparent self's ordered preferences are only ordered as such based upon the intentional ends pursued at that given moment, and are thus a function of a broader schema as by Morgenthau's critique of the framing of the

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<sup>93</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), 6.

<sup>94</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129.

<sup>95</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 26; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 155.

<sup>96</sup> Koskenniemi, 444, 452, 448-449; Scheuerman, 46.

<sup>97</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 211.

<sup>98</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 222.

delimitation of ends.<sup>99</sup> An ordered hierarchy of preferences to choose rational courses of action seems to be a function of both an agent's environment, self, and broader intentions.

Finally, the notion that one must be certain of one's preferences always and everywhere denies the possibility of people being uncertain, even about things and situations that they have never encountered; admitting the possibility about uncertainty wreaks havoc for *homo economicus*.<sup>100</sup>

Beyond this, the impossibility of the transparent self leads to further conclusion. If preferences cannot be objectively ordered, then preferences can conflict; if there is no order to them, an agent can be indecisive about how to reconcile them. This becomes especially relevant when irreconcilable "preferences" conflict. This entails the possibility of genuine dilemmas on the order of Buridan's Ass. The problem most often occurs in moral philosophy as a moral dilemma: when "an agent regards herself as having moral reasons to do each of two actions, but doing both actions is not possible,"<sup>101</sup> but there is no reason why this dilemma cannot apply to behavior in general.<sup>102</sup> The absence of a transparent self entails the possibility of genuine moral dilemmas, a profound problem in practical moral philosophy.

Because the self is never motivated by a single interest, reason, or emotion at one time, introspective study of them is hindered (unlike the natural sciences, distillation of causal factors is impossible, thereby rendering absolute knowledge of them impossible). Moreover, external study is hindered by a problem raised by philosophy of mind – external observation of the activity going on within an agent's mind is impossible.<sup>103</sup> To synthesize a conclusion about the nature of emotions and interests, the epistemic difficulty of 'knowing' precisely by what one is motivated – what preferences one may be acting on – and the role of the intellect, Morgenthau is forwarding that the 'self' is not entirely

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<sup>99</sup> Sen, "Internal Consistency of Choice." 499.

<sup>100</sup> Elster, "When Rationality Fails," 28-29.

<sup>101</sup> McConnell, Terrance. "Moral Dilemmas." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-dilemmas/>

<sup>102</sup> Dupré, 131.

<sup>103</sup> Heil, John. *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 1099.

transparent to the individual or any external observer.<sup>104</sup> One cannot possess a total self-knowledge, and that the self-knowledge which one lacks *is* relevant to how one is (un)able to affect social actions, because one is neither entirely conscious of motivations nor does one possess the ability to control what one cannot even recognize as a source. A lack of knowledge about the self also entails a lack of knowledge about action. Moreover, this lack of knowledge about by what one is motivated also denies the absolute possibility of controlling those motivations. Unfortunately, if the self is not transparent, then the possibility for unqualified rational self-direction is compromised.<sup>105</sup> And Hilary Putnam says that the notion that “one’s choices must flawlessly reveal one’s values,” a hangover from logical positivism, is absurd.<sup>106</sup> *Homo economicus*’ transparent self is a bad a priori assumption to adopt.

The ordering of preferences is studied empirically by Kahneman and Tversky, broken into two distinct categorical types: invariance, that different representations of the same scenario would yield the same solutions, and dominance, that ordered preferences are obeyed.<sup>107</sup> They find, while both are essential to *homo economicus* assumptions, both fail for the same reason – an individual’s perspective (how they perceive data) determines their behavior in the face of decisions.<sup>108</sup> The emotional responses aroused by the way in which data is presented determines the outcome to some extent – which suggests that there is no perfect knowledge of an ordered preference hierarchy, this knowledge alone is insufficient, or (more likely) both.<sup>109</sup> This mixture of the two cases is especially so when dominance fails because the lower-order preference is presented in a way to make it more appealing – thus

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<sup>104</sup> Consider this passage from Nietzsche’s *Daybreak*, as part of a broader similar thesis on against the transparent self that Nietzsche was also forwarding (and from which Morgenthau may have been inspired): “the primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, how human action is brought about... Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be! We have expended so much labor on learning that external things are not as they appear to us to be – very well! The case is the same with the inner world!” Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Daybreak*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Aphorism 116.

<sup>105</sup> This should not be read as an absolute rejection of the will – just a qualification of how free one actually is.

<sup>106</sup> Putnam, 50.

<sup>107</sup> Tversky and Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” 62.

<sup>108</sup> Tversky and Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” 63.

<sup>109</sup> Tversky and Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” 63-66.

confounding human responses.<sup>110</sup> Their conclusion is that one's "perspective" is determinant to some extent of one's behavior. Therefore, contra *homo economicus*, human behavior is not only intransparent, but it is affected by, and therefore a function of, perspectivalism.

### 3.5 Objective, or Perfect, Knowledge of Empirical Reality

Perspectivalism holds that knowledge of empirical reality is limited to subjectivity, being dependent on one's particular position among the phenomena one seeks to know (what one is able to perceive), as well as by the psychological (and thereby social) mechanisms that structure one's interpretation of them; objective knowledge of reality (phenomena) is impossible. A particularly difficult assumption of *homo economicus* is that of perfect knowledge of empirical reality, the conditions under which it must decide and act – in other words, it must necessarily oppose perspectivalism in these cases.<sup>111</sup> However, even if this assumption is not explicitly adopted, the full implications of perspectivalism are not addressed by much decision-theory. Morgenthau, on the other hand, asserts perspectivalism as a characteristic of human nature, entailing extremely limited knowledge of reality for any individual.<sup>112</sup> Information about reality cannot be perfectly had through the senses, and obtaining greater and greater detail of reality becomes more and more costly.<sup>113</sup> This is probably drawn from his study of Weberian social science methodology (Weber's neo-Kantianism)<sup>114</sup> and his fondness of Nietzsche.<sup>115</sup> This is to say that, for Morgenthau, a

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<sup>110</sup> Tversky and Kahneman, "Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions," 75.

<sup>111</sup> Dupré, 122; As above, this is not the case with all game theory but, when it is included in an assumption of *homo economicus*, it is a particularly important assumption.

<sup>112</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141-145, 162-167; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099; Frei, 141-144; Molloy, 3, 8, 18-19 (although Molloy mistakenly attributes this position to Carr (instead of Weber)); Gismondi, "Tragedy, Realism, and Postmodernity," 455; Jervis, Robert. "Hans Morgenthau, Realism, and the Study of International Politics." *Social Research*. (1994, 61.4), (1099/7); Lebow, 383; Cf. Tversky and Kahneman, "Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions," 65-66, however, instead of 'perspectivalism' they use the term 'framing'; the meaning is clearly the same.

<sup>113</sup> Dupré, 122; Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102, 113-115, 117.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Oakes, Guy. *Weber and Rickert: Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 20, 22-23.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), Aphorism 556, 563, 567; 556 states "There are no 'facts-in-themselves,' for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be 'facts,'" exemplifying the point.

fundamental qualification to any “knowledge” one can possess of empirical reality is that that knowledge is necessarily a product of one’s mind – that knowledge of reality is perspectival.<sup>116</sup> The formation of one’s perspective comes from two different sources: the social influences upon one and the empirical reality to which one is exposed. Reality is not only perceived but necessarily interpreted by the mind – through conceptualization, which comes from socially-ingrained speech as discussed above. This entails also that every perspective formed is necessarily unique, although this does not preclude the possibility that there is the possibility for a meaningful convergence on what reality is among individuals.

Interaction with the world must occur through the senses, and sense is restricted to the individual level and therefore knowledge of the world is restricted to individual mind’s capacity to process reality. The human mind rationally structures reality and this is because the human mind is incapable of perceiving and processing reality without limitation (the human mind is limited in its faculties).<sup>117</sup> Reality, the formation of one’s perspective, is formed through an individual’s abstraction and concept formation about it.<sup>118</sup> “‘Perception’ supplies ‘reason’ with neutral facts” – but these facts are only as good as one’s ability to perceive, no matter how disinterested the perceiver may be.<sup>119</sup> One’s perspective of reality is a function of what Kahneman calls the accessibility of a complex situation to the mind; accessibility is the ability of an individual to organize the phenomena being presented to the senses into a rational structure, and it is an ability that develops with experience.<sup>120</sup> The imperfect nature of perception is what causes invariance, a necessary assumption of *homo economicus*, to fail.<sup>121</sup> Determining whether or not reality conforms with an already existing conceptual abstraction depends upon one’s capacity for good judgment, which is the capacity to identify the basic aspects of a phenomenon, to be able to idealize a

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<sup>116</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 101.

<sup>117</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 141-142, 144.

<sup>118</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 149-151; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099.

<sup>119</sup> Putnam, 103. Dupré, 34, 130.

<sup>120</sup> Kahneman, Daniel. “Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics.” *The American Economic Review*. (2003, 93.5), 1452-1454

<sup>121</sup> Tversky and Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” 65-66.

phenomenon to its essential nature.<sup>122</sup> However, this idealization is always affected by the environment in which it is perceived, and therefore it is grounded in a context, which means that it is not something that can be perfected.<sup>123</sup> In other words, whether or not a state of affairs meets the *ceteris paribus* qualification for scientific causality is a function of judgment – *ceteris paribus* is an extension of one's faculty of judgment and perception.

In addition to the individual's own imposition of rational structure upon reality, the basis for which one is able to attribute rationality to reality is informed by how one frames one's perspective, and this is informed, in part, by concepts and values, which are relevantly a product of socialization as much as individual meditation.<sup>124</sup> The concepts available to one are also the result of valuations that arrive not just from the individual but also from values that are reinforced through the abstract "society" of which one is a part.<sup>125</sup> Speaking of the social scientist, Morgenthau says "The mind of the social scientist is the meeting place of all the pressures emanating from particular groups and society as a whole, and his own reaction to these pressures will determine the objects, methods, and results of his scientific investigation";<sup>126</sup> but there is no reason why framing must be restricted just to social scientists' interpretations of phenomena – those pressures affect every individual. "Truth itself becomes relative to social interests and emotions."<sup>127</sup> However, these social interests are still a function of what an individual perceives to be the abstract social interests; that is social interests and pressures are limited to what an individual knows them to be, based on his or her own experience with them.<sup>128</sup> One's perspective is affected both by temporal and spatial conditions as well as by individualistic and societal valuations, and this means that

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<sup>122</sup> Consider Aphorism 512 from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*: "Logic is bound to the condition: Assume there are identical cases. In fact, to make possible logical thinking and inferences, this condition must first be treated fictitiously as fulfilled. That is: the will to logical truth can be carried through only after a fundamental falsification of all events is assumed." This falsification, in terms of social facts, is the deduction of social laws because it requires assuming very different circumstances are relevantly equally.

<sup>123</sup> Kahneman, "Maps of Bounded Rationality," 1454.

<sup>124</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 142-144, 162-164; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 19, 146-147, 151, 155-158; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 36, 118; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 72.

<sup>125</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 163.

<sup>126</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 164.

<sup>127</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 167.

<sup>128</sup> Elster, "When Rationality Fails." 28.



perfect knowledge of empirical reality is impossible as both a limitation to the agent's mental capacity and as a socialized qualification of the agent's approach to reality.

In addition, Morgenthau's fifth principle of realism deals with moral dilemmas among states that arise from perspectivalism and the inability to order one's preferences with certitude; particular perspectives about what is morally required conflict over the nature of what is absolutely required.<sup>129</sup> Moral Dilemmas result here amongst individuals because, even with a clear and undisputed set of norms held in common among them, perspectivalism results in different empirical realities (this is in addition to the possibility of moral dilemmas within individuals as described above under the intransparency of the self-section).

### 3.6 Universalization of *Homo Economicus*

From the above, another criticism about *homo economicus* arises. *Homo economicus* rests upon an assumption that human beings are relevantly similar in their behavior – that agents are homogenous in their decision-making, otherwise it would be a useless predictive, explanatory, and normative device. Thus, in order to make *homo economicus* a useful device, serious restrictions upon agency must be assumed, otherwise it won't function.<sup>130</sup> However, given the above criticisms, there are no grounds to hold that behavior across agents will be relevantly similar – agents' ability to decide are formed according to their varied biological schemes, social conditions, their particular perspectives and the information that that presents to them, and even the degree to which an individual "knows" his or her self. Understanding human behavior means understanding what is universal and what is not.<sup>131</sup> There are many facets of human behavior that lead to differentiated behavior. "[Behavior is] the result of hereditary influences and social experience. *Since he cannot choose these influences and experiences, he cannot choose his social interests and*

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<sup>129</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), 12; Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 325-326. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 39. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 160-167; Morgenthau, Hans J. "Another 'Great Debate:' The National Interest of the United States." *The American Political Science Review*. (1952, 46.4), 983-984.

<sup>130</sup> Brennan, "Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?" 53.

<sup>131</sup> Dupré, 100.

*emotional attitudes*. These interests and emotions may indeed change. Here, again, change is, however, not the product of a conscious choice, but of a new social experience which transforms man as a social being.”<sup>132</sup> As above, these different temperaments, from varied interests and emotions, result in different behavior in relevantly identical circumstances. Additionally, the will should result in behavior being differentiated amongst individual agents even more so.

Therefore, Morgenthau concludes that there is no universal human nature; that *homo economicus*’ assumption of universalization is a bad one. In his words, “A certain group of people may react upon an identical cause in an identical or in a different way according to the physical or psychological conditions prevailing in the group, and according to the same conditions it may react upon different causes in an identical way.”<sup>133</sup> If individuality is recognized in any meaningful way, then it makes little sense to attempt to reduce all human behavior to rationalistic and universal processes.<sup>134</sup> This is to say that *homo economicus* presupposes that individuality is irrelevant for behavioral considerations. Once the limitations on *homo economicus* are loosened, and some minimal psychological complexity is admitted, any claim to universality becomes transparent.<sup>135</sup> Human beings are relevantly heterogeneous in their behavior and decision-making abilities, which compromise the utility of predictive and normative devices such as *homo economicus*.

In terms of biology and interests (factors particular to an agent), because humans are genetically differentiated, this results in humans being relevantly plural in terms of behavior (and because of this, not universally reducible to any monistic factor).<sup>136</sup> There is no universal, rationalizable self. Put succinctly, “men are in different ways governed by their passions.”<sup>137</sup> The rationally controlled, egoistic *homo economicus* abstracts away the ‘human’ of the human being in the quixotic pursuit of a device to understand, predict, and

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<sup>132</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 164-165 (my italics); cf. Morgenthau, “The Limitations of Science,” 180 for more.

<sup>133</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129; cf. Dupré, 92, 131-132.

<sup>134</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 139; cf. Dupré, 8.

<sup>135</sup> Brennan, “Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?” 53.

<sup>136</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche*, 126; Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, 24.

<sup>137</sup> Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*, 1099, (44-47). Cf. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 26.

control any and all humans.<sup>138</sup> In fact, as Nietzsche has claimed, those natural tendencies are inextricable and the result is that they produce differentiated behavior.

Beyond just the biologically and psychologically differentiating factors, there are also societal differentiations (factors particular to a specific group of agents), humans are socialized differently and again this results in humans being relevantly plural in terms of behavior (and cultural groups are not universally reducible to any monistic factor or pattern). One's interpretive framework is a product also of socialization, one's ability to understand phenomena is conditioned by that.<sup>139</sup> In other words, because the way in which an agent interprets and values facts and conditions is a product also of socialization, an agent's understanding of and reaction to the world around him or her is conditioned from birth by his or her social and historical conditions. Thus, cultural valuations work toward the creation of particular patterns of behavior in individuals through normalization.<sup>140</sup> Because there are significantly differentiated cultures in the world, so too will behavior be differentiated as a function of this.

There is no universal anthropology, and as a consequence universal presumptions about human nature demand significant qualification. "Unlike atoms, people have goals, emotions and histories that affected their understanding and responses to external stimuli."<sup>141</sup> A perspective which discounts the differentiating factors of human behavior – history, society, biology, and psychology – abstracts away the very thing it is trying to understand, and cannot understand, predict, or provide justified guidelines for human behavior because it is no longer discussing human beings.<sup>142</sup> The possibility of creating any relevant social engineering, based on predictions from anthropological deductions, "depends upon a great number of circumstances over which we have only remote control or none... Two

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<sup>138</sup> Elster, "When Rationality Fails." 41.

<sup>139</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 164. cf. Bain, 457. Morgenthau, "Thought and Action," 159-160 (See above).

<sup>140</sup> Morgenthau's example here is that "certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in another." Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) 134; it is important to keep in mind that normalization and normativity are not determinant, but merely contributive

<sup>141</sup> Lebow, 246.

<sup>142</sup> Morgenthau, "Common Sense and Theories," 209-211. Cf. Dupré 145-146.

identical causes, for instance, may produce different results.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, analysis of the self through prediction or disposition needs to be qualified by what factors are known to be present in that particular self. This, however, greatly reduces their value because those factors may not be present in another self.

### **3.7 The Scientific Nature of *Homo Economicus***

In conclusion, given the presence of un-rationalizable factors in human nature, such as emotions, cultural variance, and the will, the absence of total self-control, the intransparent self, and ultimately, significantly diverse behavior across agents (the non-universal agent) – *homo economicus*, as a rationalized substitute of any and every human being for the purposes of behavioral prediction, loses a lot of sense. The appeal of an agent’s reducibility to rational, self-interested behavior is the predictability this grants, which is a result of the certainty that it provides. If agents can be shown to be relevantly equal and to behave relatively the same, then it can become easy to rationalize projects such as a universal social contract justification of normativity or to predict with certainty how anyone (or even nation-states) will respond to certain stimuli. But rational choice theory and *homo economicus* perspectives obscure as much as they illuminate and as such need to be used as a predictive device with extreme caution.<sup>144</sup> The superimposition of rational behavior on reality is exactly that, a rationalization, while rationality may be convenient for its predictability, these above conditions deny precisely that.<sup>145</sup> The appearance of rationality is merely a product of the observer’s mind – their efforts to distill a complex of phenomena into something rationally structured. Because so many of the necessary conditions for sustaining the *homo economicus* thesis are absent, its reductive approach to human nature abstracts out reality to such an extent that the abstraction no longer represents the phenomenon it purports to idealize. Depictions of human behavior as rationalizable, and thus predictable, “are valid only under the assumption that the essence of world and man is

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<sup>143</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 128. cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Limitations of Science and the Problem of Social Planning,” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1944, 54.3), 175-176; Lebow, 246.

<sup>144</sup> Morgenthau, “Common Sense and Theories,” 208-209. cf. Dupré, 118-119 and Lebow, 248 for discussions on the implications of this.

<sup>145</sup> Morgenthau, “Common Sense and Theories,” 211. Cf. Bain 453-454 and Lebow, 248.

rational throughout,”<sup>146</sup> but having allowed for the fact that there are indeterminate, unrationalizable, and non-universal aspects of human behavior denies the possibility of deducing laws of human behavior, of any sort, denying certainty in social action and prediction.

The attempt to reduce human behavior to rational processes, to understand the laws by which human behavior is governed, is a quixotic search because the only device capable of doing so – *homo economicus* – must suspend significant aspects of human behavior to achieve the goal of rationalization. The adoption of *homo economicus* reeks of *hubris*. Human behavior is inherently uncertain.<sup>147</sup> Speaking to the statesman, but in way that can be generalized to speak to any ‘scientist’ seeking to understand human behavior, Morgenthau states, “No formula will give the statesman certainty, no calculation eliminate the risk, no accumulation of facts open the future. While his mind yearns for the apparent certainty of science, his actual condition is more akin to the gambler’s than to the scientist’s.”<sup>148</sup>

Human behavior does not conform to scientific method. Referring back to Elster’s conditions, it fulfills none of them; it cannot be formalized, causal explanations are indeterminate, and repeatability is approximated only by probabilistic gambling. Formalizations of human behavior, for the purposes of scientific study, are elusive because particular characteristics of individuals do affect their behavior: particular human beings behave differently because they are relevantly distinct individuals and therefore scientific generalizations cannot be made about human behavior.<sup>149</sup> Causal formulations of human behavior are difficult to affix because identical causes elicit different effects and different causes elicit the same effects on different individuals and groups because of their relevant distinctiveness; moreover, the true motivational reasons for individuals’ actions may not even be accessible to those individuals, let alone a scientist studying them, further pushing

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<sup>146</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 209.

<sup>147</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 214.

<sup>148</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 221.

<sup>149</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10, 129, 139.

this back.<sup>150</sup> “The social sciences are in doubt as to the occurrence not only of the causes but also of the effects once a cause has taken place.”<sup>151</sup> Finally, human behavior is not repeatable according to scientific standards: adopting scientific procedure by placing individuals under exactly identical circumstances holds no guarantee that they will behave identically because of the very fact that individuals exist and there is no universal human nature.<sup>152</sup> The only truth to be had by abstracting human nature to arrive to some universals about human behavior would be well known and trivial.<sup>153</sup> If human behavior does not conform to scientific method, then only one conclusion is permitted to a scientist – human behavior is unscientific.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, Morgenthau makes a strong and interesting critique that can be applied to contemporary theories of rational choice. Having flushed out this critique, two unique claims about Morgenthau have been made clear. First, Morgenthau, as opposed to what some of his detractors claim, was not forwarding a scientific or rationalist account of human nature or politics. To the contrary, he was raising the same critique of this that his detractors are now raising against him, which should raise the possibility that this critique of Morgenthau is somehow wrong. In fact, Morgenthau’s own critique of rational choice theory might even be useful for would-be detractors to use in their own critiques of rational choice theory because of the broadness of issues it manages to raise. Second, Morgenthau’s critique of rational choice theory is, in itself, a valuable theoretical contribution to contemporary philosophical debates because it represents a vanguard to the contemporary critique of rational choice theory, made by authors like Hilary Putnam, John Dupre, Mario De Caro, and Amartya Sen.

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<sup>150</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127-129, 149-152; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) 6.

<sup>151</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 131.

<sup>152</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129-131, 154, 157; Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*, 1099, (44-47). Cf. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 26.

<sup>153</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” In *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1099.

In addition, Morgenthau's critique of rational choice theory should have profound consequences for realism in general. Obviously, if Morgenthau is making such a critique, then Morgenthau's realism, as a theory, must somehow be affected by this. Morgenthau's realism cannot sensibly be a critique of rational choice theory for bad assumptions about human agency while simultaneously embracing it as a descriptive account of the nature of decision-makers in international relations. Moreover, it raises questions about the appropriateness of considering neo-realism to be the heir of realism, since neo-realist accounts of international behavior begin exactly with what Morgenthau critiques – that is, as a behavioralist account of states' rational agency in their pursuit of power and survival.<sup>154</sup> However, this summary of Morgenthau's critique leaves much to be desired. If Morgenthau critiques rational choice theory (and thus logically cannot embrace this account of human nature without being hopelessly self-contradictory), then what does he believe to accurately characterize human nature? Moreover, where does this leave his infamous *animus dominandi* – which seems to suggest (as detractors of Morgenthau will claim) that he ends up accidentally or even intentionally embracing some sort of rational agency theory anyway.

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<sup>154</sup> Thayer, Bradley A. "Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism, and International Politics." *International Security*. (2000, 25.2), 124-125, 130-136; cf. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1099.

## IV: Morgenthau's Positive Account of Human Nature

### “More-than-Scientific-Man”

When one speaks of humanity, the idea is fundamental that this is something which separates and distinguishes man from nature. In reality, however, there is no such separation: “natural” qualities and those called truly “human” are inseparably grown together. Man, in his highest and noblest capacities, is wholly nature and embodies its uncanny dual character. Those of his abilities which are terrifying and considered inhuman may even be the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity can grow in impulse, deed, and work.

– Nietzsche

Following Morgenthau's critique of human nature, a positive account of the human nature at the root of his political realism will be attempted. The value in this will be not only to supplement the negative critique with a coherent positive account of what human nature is, but also to further dispel the misunderstandings of what Morgenthau's “realist” human nature is. Importantly, this chapter, in its focus on Morgenthau's positive account, will address his infamous *animus dominandi* drive, which is the source of much of the controversy (and misunderstandings) about what Morgenthau held to be the root of human nature and the source of realism's politics. To that end, the intent, building upon the previous chapter's efforts, is to better establish Morgenthau's role within contemporary debates about human nature and to show that the human nature at the root of realism has not been properly understood yet and to provide that understanding. Only from this proper understanding of Morgenthau's human nature, can one fully and properly apply his first principle of political realism – not to mention realism writ large – to international politics.

It should be recalled that Morgenthau's account of human nature holds that it cannot be a scientific; human nature is inherently unscientific. This conclusion arises from several analytically distinct critiques Morgenthau makes about human nature, which were discussed in the previous chapter. They are:



- i. Rationality is more robust than just instrumental rationality. In addition, Irrationality is relevant for evaluating and predicting human behavior; humans are *pathological*: emotions affect one's ability to follow the dictates of reason;
- ii. Motivations are not reducible to rational self-interest (egoism); they are motivated by *transcendent concerns*, such as society and morality, as well as egoistic concerns;
- iii. Humans do not have perfect self-control and are not entirely "free," but are *causally determined* both by real environmental and physical factors;
- iv. The self is *intransparent*: preferences and motivations are not perfectly known and, accordingly, they cannot be made into a hierarchy or system of ordered preferences;
- v. Humans are perspectivalism, insufficient information forces decisions to be made in uncertainty;
- vi. No universal human can be abstracted – human beings are relevantly *heterogeneous* and defy reductionist attempts;
- vii. *Humans are unscientific* – human behavior is not reducible to law-like axioms.

Although Morgenthau ultimately denies a scientific account of human nature, this does not mean that a rational, political meaningful account of human nature cannot be made. He presents this notion through a tension: "There is a rational element in political action that makes politics susceptible to theoretical analysis, but there is also a contingent element in politics that obviates the possibility of theoretical understanding."<sup>1</sup> He concludes this thought by drawing attention to the "insuperable limits on the development of a rational theory of international relations" which the nature of politics, and thus human nature, places upon the field.<sup>2</sup> Somehow, politics is rationally understandable yet also contingent, and therefore defiant of scientific method. This points toward the distinction between reason/rationality and science. Treating rationality and science as synonymous is a fallacy that will be guarded against. On the contrary, *a rational theory of human nature will deny the possibility of a scientific account of human nature*. Or, as Morgenthau put it, "Politics

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<sup>1</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 254. Cf. pp. 254-257.

<sup>2</sup> Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 257.

must be understood through reason, yet it is not in reason that it finds its model.”<sup>3</sup> A scientific account of human nature necessitates that the account be formalized, be causally explicable, and that it be repeatable, *ceteris paribus*. The critique in the previous chapter shows that human nature defies all three of these criteria. Despite this, rational claims about human nature can be made – the above seven points from the previous chapter are all rational claims about human nature, they are just negative claims. Moreover, a positive, rational theory of human nature will be made below, it will just not yield abstract laws of human behavior that will have any value in determining actions for or outcomes to particular cases; that is, it will not yield a science of human behavior.

This chapter will proceed by laying out the framework for human nature that seems most reasonable according to what Morgenthau does say about human nature. Unfortunately, He did, Morgenthau once said that “the element of universality, transcending any particular area and common to all, may be called human nature.” Although, he did not provide a clear explicit account of what human nature is. A rational account of human nature can be started, at least, from his critiques of other accounts, which can be inverted to provide a positive account of human nature. Moreover, there are some clues that can be followed: Morgenthau’s account seems roughly consistent with one made by Nietzsche, another thinker deeply who believed that science was overstepping its limits. While there is no way to say with certainty this is what Morgenthau had in mind, its consistency with the Nietzschean model, Morgenthau’s love of Nietzsche, and the way in which this model fits with everything else I’ve said so far adds credibility to the claim that the following could be used a model to understand Morgenthau’s realism.

This Nietzschean influenced account of human nature will begin with a description of so-called first nature, which are the properties inherent to the individual human being. This includes biology and psychology – that is, natural drives – and these drives correspond to the Platonic notion of *phusis and epithumion*. Within this section, Morgenthau’s most important drive for discussing politics – the *animus dominandi* – will obviously be

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<sup>3</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 10.

discussed. Following the discussion of first nature, will be a discussion of second nature. Second nature is comprised of properties of human nature that are not inherent to an individual, such as society or *nomos*.

After laying out the dual nature of human nature, the interplay between the two will be briefly discussed. Morgenthau goes into a discussion about the causes for the collapse of the Weimar Republic, a liberal democracy, into a Nazi Germany, a fascist regime. The reasons for this seem to be related to the nature of Weimar's liberal democracy itself and these reasons will be expounded. Some general conclusions about the relationship between first and second nature can also be drawn, in that a culture can be either healthy or unhealthy in the degree to which it interacts with first nature's drives.

## 1.0 First Nature

Morgenthau's entire concept of human nature is typically reduced to one characteristic that he is famous for having attributed to it: the *animus dominandi*. While it is undeniable that he attributed that animus dominandi to human nature and his realist literature does circle around the notion of power that it suggests, neither the *animus dominandi* itself nor its relationship to human behavior has received a full investigation. For Morgenthau to come down so hard upon social scientists for being fixated on monocausal explanations of social phenomena,<sup>4</sup> as discussed in the previous chapter, and then to embrace one himself, in the *animus dominandi* drive, seems utterly incoherent. Yet, this is exactly the most common interpretation of the human nature at the root of both Morgenthau's claims and at the root of political realist explanations, predictions, and prescriptions.<sup>5</sup> Despite the claims that

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 127-131 (particularly 129) 149-152; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 18-25, 46-51 (in particular, 20-21, 23, 47, 51).

<sup>5</sup> Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-10; Pin-Fat Véronique. "The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the Mysticism of the Nation-State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau." *Review of International Studies*. (2005, 31), 223; Barkawi, Tarak. "Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau, and Modern Strategic Studies." *Review of International Studies*. (1998, 24.2), 162, 174; Tellis, Ashley J. "Reconstructing Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory." In Frankel, Benjamin (Ed.). *Roots of Realism*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 40, 42; Thayer, Bradley A. "Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism, and International Politics." *International Security*. (2000, 25.2), 125, 128-129; Freyberg-Inan, Annette. *What Moves Man*. (Albany: State University of New York, 2004) 68, 78, 91; Tickner, J. Ann. "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. (1988, 17.3), 431.

Morgenthau was monistic, viz. his *animus dominandi* drive, in his approach to human nature, a careful reading shows that it was not the case. Morgenthau repeatedly mentions morality and other drives as other facets of human motivation.<sup>6</sup> Since both allusions to morality, other drives, and his anti-scientistic attitude toward human nature sometimes occur in the same text as the *animus dominandi* (most notably, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*), it is inconceivable that his opinion had changed on the matter.

### 1.1 The Centrality of the *Animus Dominandi*

A relatively consistent feature of Morgenthau's political writing is the *animus dominandi*.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this does not make it more easily grasped and it may be the most misunderstood aspect of Morgenthau. As already mentioned, the common interpretation of Morgenthau's human nature is that it was monistically reducible to just this *animus dominandi*. This is not the case, however. It does, however, play an important role in understanding politics, which is both why it is so prevalent and why others so often understand Morgenthau's theory of human nature as nothing more than this particular drive.

The *animus dominandi* is simply defined as the 'desire for power,' or "the desire to maintain the range of one's own person with regard to others, to increase it, or to demonstrate it."<sup>8</sup> While the theme of the *animus dominandi* is consistent throughout his literature, the term is not. Significantly, he does not use it in *Politics among Nations*, but replaces it with the bio-psychological 'drive to dominate,' which is relevantly similar in how it motivates behavior.<sup>9</sup> The *animus dominandi* is an inalienable aspect of human

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<sup>6</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168, Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 12, 16, 243-247, 266; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 49, 59, 107-109, 325

<sup>7</sup> This requires qualification – it occurs throughout his career, on occasion, but it does not receive such a significant focus. I can find only five references to it in his work, although it does receive an important place in his best account of human nature, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. Conversely, it does not even receive a mention in *Politics among Nations* (although a drive feature is alluded to at one point which serves a similar function in terms of human nature – Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 39 (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)). It seems to be the case that interpreters of Morgenthau have attributed more value to it than he did; perhaps they do so rightly, however.

<sup>8</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 192

<sup>9</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 33 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition); cf. 9 (Third Principle), 11, 14 (Sixth Principle)

nature, although its dominance within a particular individual varies; the relative strength of drives, such as the *animus dominandi*, is a factor of both an individual's bio-psychological first nature and the societal conditions in which that individual is thrown, which may create conditions for it to flourish or be repressed by other drives.<sup>10</sup>

When describing the *animus dominandi* drive, Morgenthau *always* describes its nature alongside (as opposed to superimposing itself upon) other drives. Thus, while it is true that the *animus dominandi* is ever-present, it is not ever-dominant and cannot be **the** constitutive feature of human nature, as commentators commonly suggest. Instead, it competes with other transcendent drives which Morgenthau never defines, but only alludes to. The most one gets comes from his parallel analysis of transcendent drives alongside the *animus dominandi*, or the analysis of different idealized anthropologies in *Politics among Nations*. Consider when he likens it to other transcendent desires: these are “the mystical desire for union with the universe, the love of Don Juan, [and] Faust's thirst for knowledge... [all are] attempts at pushing the individual beyond his natural limits toward a transcendent goal [and] have also in common that this transcendent goal, this resting point, is reached only in imagination but never in reality.”<sup>11</sup> These transcendent drives, of which the *animus dominandi* is only one among others, are all caricatures of different ‘types’ of humans. In describing the *animus dominandi*, Morgenthau never suggests that it has absolute priority in human nature

The reason for the prevalence of the *animus dominandi* in Morgenthau's discussions of human nature is alluded to in the above quotation, but is better explained by appealing to the Second and Sixth Principles of Realism. The social world and its relations are too

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<sup>10</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 33 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

<sup>11</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 194. (The *animus dominandi* is the fourth attempt). Three of the other four references I've been able to find to the *animus dominandi* are relevantly identical to this passage; cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1945, 56.2). 13; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Science: Servant or Master?*. (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1972), 9-10; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Love and Power.” *Commentary*. (1962, 32.3), 250.

The final reference is in Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 243. While Morgenthau does not present the *animus dominandi* alongside other drives, he does contrast power with the human faculty for love, which would seem to be a drive diametrically opposed to it when one considers what Morgenthau has to say about it in his “Love and Power.”

complicated to be understood without conceptual abstraction, in the form of ideal-types. In order to create ideal-types different analytical spheres are distilled; one such sphere is “the political.”<sup>12</sup> The political as a distinct conceptual sphere of social analysis is defined by its aim of analyzing power and the relationships it creates.<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau defines politics in this way because he believes that a fundamental problem of politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that it disregards the analysis of power – and this may be a legitimate concern following Schmitt’s well-known critique of liberal philosophies, theories, and ideologies.<sup>14</sup> For Morgenthau, power is an *instrumental* device to achieve one’s (or the organization that one represents) interests through the psychological manipulation of others (who may either be necessary to achieve said interest or may present some sort of obstacle to it (for example, because of scarcity or ideological disagreement)).<sup>15</sup> However, analysis of this sort is ideal-typical, as opposed to real, which is to say that it eliminates other relevant ‘variables’ from analysis to better understand this particular ‘variable,’ power. As Morgenthau says, in what could be construed as a follow-up upon the second and sixth principles of realism in his *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, “By making power its central concept, a theory of politics does not presume that none but power relations control political action. What it must presume is the need for a central concept which allows the observer to distinguish the field of politics from other social spheres, to orient himself in the maze of empirical phenomena which make up that field, and to establish a measure of rational order within it.”<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the prevalence of the *animus dominandi* in Morgenthau’s political analysis is due to the fact that it is political. The *animus dominandi* is *one* relevant characteristic of human behavior that becomes particularly relevant for study when manifest politically, even more so in international political relations. The primary problem, for Morgenthau, was that it was being ignored in scientific accounts of human nature (because power seems to be

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<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 14. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 112-113, 116.

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 43, 45, 50-51; Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Trans. George Schwab. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1099.

<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 9. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 110.

<sup>16</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 48.

inherently unscientific and inherently immoral) and treated, if at all treated, as if it were a problem to be overcome – and certainly not recognized as some embedded characteristic of human nature that must be taken seriously.<sup>17</sup> This sort of approach obscures the gravity that a characteristic of human nature like the *animus dominandi* can affect in political relations. Therefore, Morgenthau's intention was not to assert the priority of the *animus dominandi* over all other facets of human being. Instead, his intention was to reassert the validity of one facet among many, one important for the study of a real phenomenon that occurs that he defined as politics.<sup>18</sup>

However, something additional that Morgenthau emphasizes is that, as much as it is important to recognize and understand strictly political variables, like the *animus dominandi*, it is equally important to reconsider them as abstracted principles and therefore take on a comprehensive social perspective. In his own words,

This realist defense of the autonomy of the political sphere against its subversion by other modes of thought does not imply disregard for the existence and importance of these other modes of thought. It rather implies that each should be assigned its proper sphere and function...

Recognizing that these different facets of human nature exist, political realism also recognizes that in order to understand one of them one has to deal with it on its own terms.<sup>19</sup>

For Morgenthau, the *animus dominandi* is not the overruling, transcendent drive, it is merely the most politically relevant drive, transcendent and otherwise. Since it is

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<sup>17</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 4, 90-105, 204-215

<sup>18</sup> On the analytic definition of "politics" as the psychological relationship of wills, known as power, some may dispute that "this" definition is what really politics is and that politics is something else. Fair enough, but Morgenthau's point is not to split hairs over the definition of what is politics. His point is that "this" phenomenon that he has defined as politics, whatever one wants to call it, has been significantly ignored in contemporary social studies and it is this conceptual blindness to this phenomenon, whatever it should be called, has resulted in several tragedies that may have been avoided otherwise. Thus, to redefine politics as something else (such as Arendt's like the power of humans to act in concert (cf. Klusmeyer, Douglas. "Hannah Arendt's Critical Realism: Power Justice, and Responsibility." In Lang Jr., Anthony and John Williams (Eds.). *Hannah Arendt and International Relations: Readings across the Lines*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 140.) completely misses the point of what Morgenthau was actually doing, and merely confirms the problem to which he points. Changing the definition of what politics is risks obscure or dismissing the very problem Morgenthau sought to illuminate. Thus, alternative definitions of politics must explain and justify their dismissal of Morgenthau's account of this particular being – nomography is not the issue here, but a particular, and particularly dangerous phenomenon. See Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 95-97 for a discussion of this.

<sup>19</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 14.

not the only relevant drive for conceiving of human nature, but merely the most politically relevant one, Morgenthau's fixation with it becomes easily explainable and his use of it becomes more understandable, but with regard to its centrality in politics and its comparatively minor role within human nature in general.

## 1.2 The Nature of the *Animus Dominandi* – Driven by Power

The desire for power that the *animus dominandi* represents is rather indeterminate. Morgenthau acknowledges this indeterminacy in his Third Principle: "Realism does not endow its key concept of interest defined as power with a meaning that is fixed once and for all."<sup>20</sup> "Power may comprise *anything* that establishes and maintains the domination of man over man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safe guards."<sup>21</sup> Power is an instrumental device to achieve one's (or the organization's, which one represents) interests, whatever and however diverse those may be, through the psychological manipulation of others (who may either be necessary to achieve said interest or may present some sort of obstacle to it (for example, because of scarcity or ideological disagreement)).<sup>22</sup>

However, this definition of power is qualified later on in *Politics among Nations*. This is because there are also different types of power. *Political* power is a limited strictly to a **psychological** relation between wills, and it is derived from the expectation of benefits, the fear of disadvantages, or the respect for men or institutions; importantly *he explicitly denies force as political power*.<sup>23</sup> The *animus dominandi* is a psychological relationship applied instrumentally in order to obtain some further aim, and this precision is part of Morgenthau's attempt to delimit a distinct sphere for political analysis.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 8-9 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition) 9, 11 (my emphasis).

<sup>22</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 29 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). This distinction would encompass economic power as well. See also Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107-111 for an in-depth discussion about the distinction between political and military power and Morgenthau's motivations for doing so.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, Michael C. "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power." *International Organization*. (2004, 58.4), 649.



To conclude, the *animus dominandi* is indeed the ‘evil’ desire to dominate. However, in no way should it be understood to be the only drive responsible for or the overwhelming principle of human nature. Its relevance is for political analysis, which is understood according to its distinction as a sphere of social analysis not as a comprehensive social analysis. The *animus dominandi* is merely one bio-psychological drive, and it is one among many.<sup>25</sup> Its importance, however, cannot be overstated and for this reason it cannot be ignored without risking tragedy according to Morgenthau.

### 1.3 The Plurality of Drives

Thus, an individual’s particular constitution is the product of many such drives, which is something that is continually omitted in analysis of Morgenthau’s theory of human nature. Following his typology of the *animus dominandi*, Morgenthau explicitly states this,

By setting the desire for power apart from selfishness and from the other transcendent urges, one is already doing violence to the actual nature of that desire; for it is present whenever man intends to act with regard to other men. One may separate it conceptually from the other ingredients of social action; actually there is no social action which would not contain at least a trace of this desire to make one’s own person prevail against others...

This corruption through power is to be found on the political scene. For here the *animus dominandi* is not merely blended with dominant aims of a different kind but is the very essence of the intention, the very life-blood of the action, the constitutive principle of politics as a distinct sphere of human activity. Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal...<sup>26</sup>

A comprehensive account of human nature, for Morgenthau, relies on at least a plurality of drives that motivate human behavior. These drives originate from the physical being of the agent – that is biology and psychology.<sup>27</sup> The self is a product of these biological and psychological drives, which interact in order to produce a relevant part of the self; drives, however, arise from biological sources and are therefore inaccessible to control by ‘me’, even when one does know them. We can react to them and try to suppress them, but they

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 194-195

<sup>27</sup> Leiter, Brian. “On the Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation in Nietzsche.” Cited from “Nietzsche’s Moral and Political Philosophy.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 1.2 Descriptive Critique of MPS. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche-moral-political/>. Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 5, 211; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 39.

will manifest as a result of genetics, chemicals, and other internal uncontrollable causes. Moreover, because the self is inalienable from the body, biology and psychology determine,<sup>28</sup> to some extent, who one is (as a self) and of what one is capable. The aspect of the agent that is physically ‘determined’ has been called “first nature” and is similar to the Greek notion of *phusis*, which is like the English word ‘natural’ in the sense of that which occurs by nature or naturally (without external intervention).

Recalling from the last chapter what Morgenthau alludes to about the intransparency of the self. His stance is epitomized by the following quotation from the Second Principle of Realism in *Politics among Nations*:

Motives are the most illusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by the interests and emotions of actor and observer alike. Do we really know what our own motives are? And what do we know of the motives of others?<sup>29</sup>

This is the notion that preferences and motivations are not perfectly known and, accordingly, they cannot be made into a hierarchy or system of ordered preferences because one does not actually have the certainty of what is motivating oneself to make such a hierarchy – self-knowledge is an ideal but certainly not something to expect casually of an agent in any moral or explanatory account. One cannot possess a total self-knowledge, and that the self-knowledge which one lacks *is* relevant to how one is (un)able to affect social actions, because one is neither entirely conscious of motivations nor does one possess the ability to control what one cannot even recognize as a source. A lack of knowledge about the self also entails a lack of knowledge about action. Moreover, this lack of knowledge about by what one is motivated also denies the absolute possibility of controlling those motivations.

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<sup>28</sup> Determine, as well as biology and psychology, is intended in a minimal sense. This should NOT be understood as a behaviorist conclusion. This is merely to say that biology and psychology do *relevantly* affect behavior in a way beyond our conscious control.

<sup>29</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 6 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Cf. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 129, 155, 211, 222. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 26. Notice the similarity of Morgenthau’s suggestion of intransparency to Nietzsche’s own allusion to it in *Daybreak*: “The primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, how human action is brought about... Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be! We have expended so much labor on learning that external things are not as they appear to us to be – very well! The case is the same with the inner world!” Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Daybreak*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Aphorism 116, p. 1099.

Morgenthau's recognition of a plurality of drives and an intransparent self seems best summarized by a quotation from Nietzsche's *Daybreak*, of which Morgenthau would have been aware: "However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counter play among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him."<sup>30</sup> That is, not only are there a vast amount of drives at play within the human self (playing with and against each other), they are largely unknown to one as they occur and one has little control over the presence of these drives in the self.

Finally, given the interplay of various drives of which one is often at unawares, there is also a definitive lack of absolute self-control. Because the self is not entirely transparent, we run into difficulties in self-control. After all, who can control when a certain chemical is released in the body? With the intransparency of the self, there comes a lack of control. Drawing upon this, there is a certain degree of 'fate' involved with first nature, insofar as one's psycho-physical constitution is inflexible one is determined (or doomed) to certain behaviors and certain paths. Drives causally determine, to some extent, a person. Causal determinism can be thought of as the fact that certain properties in a being limit the possibilities available to that being.<sup>31</sup> A simple example is that because human beings do not have wings we cannot naturally fly (we are causally determined not to fly). We cannot change our physical self, and those biological and psychological features that come along with it are predetermined by our genes.<sup>32</sup> These drives, with which one enters into this world and through which one develops, shape what one will become and contributes to how one acts and reacts to the external world.

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<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, Aphorism 119, p. 74; Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 489, 715; cf. Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 101-104.

<sup>31</sup> This is when, "for any individual substance (e.g. a person or some other living organism) that substance has "essential" properties that causally primary with respect to the future history of that substance, i.e. they non-trivially determine the space of possible trajectories for that substance." Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 83; Leiter actually calls this "causal essentialism"; but I have renamed it for my purposes. Leiter denies the will altogether as a conclusion from his approach of scientific naturalism; Morgenthau, in contrast, allows for some freedom of the will.

<sup>32</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 81.

In conclusion, Morgenthau has a notion of *phusis* in terms of agency, which can also be called first nature – that is the behavior of agents are, to some extent, a direct product of their physical being. What constitutes first nature is primarily the drives resulting from an agent's particular biology and psychology. The conclusions that first nature entails are the following

1. Agents are the product of multiple drives, of which the most relevant drive for the consideration of politics is the *animus dominandi*;
2. The activation and interplay of these drives is largely unknowable to agents, introspectively and otherwise;
3. This condition limits the self-control an agent has over itself in two ways – an agent does not have absolute control over which drives will even be active and cannot know which drives are responsible for his or her motivation, and this means the agent cannot react accordingly
4. This (biology and psychology) entails a limited sense of fated-ness, which can be called causal determinism.
5. Agents are biologically and psychologically perspectival – reality is a product of the information available to one's senses which are rooted in a particular place and time.

## 2.0 Second Nature

In addition to the rather naturalistic first nature of human behavior, Morgenthau also seems to be suggesting that there is a second nature that meaningfully contributes to it. Societal norms, which correspond roughly to the Greek concept of *nomos*, are considered relevant for determining the self as well, which is something else that many other accounts of human nature, such as rational choice theory, have missed.<sup>33</sup> Morgenthau most clearly affirms this when he affirms Aristotle's assessment of human being as naturally a part of a

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<sup>33</sup> Solomon, Robert C. "Nietzsche *ad hominem*: Perspectivism, Personality, and *Ressentiment* Revisited." In *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins (Eds.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 216-217.

political society (humans are political animals) and this is “true forever.”<sup>34</sup> To reiterate the previous chapter, Aristotle’s political naturalism means that human beings are naturally a part of a group.<sup>35</sup> Political nature occurs for three reasons:<sup>36</sup>

1. It is naturally occurring through reproduction and the education and rearing of children
2. Speech, as an individual ability, is naturally social (and allows/compels morality to enter into individual consideration;
3. Individuals in society cannot function apart from it (therefore, social institutions precede individuals);

Speech, or language, is central to this in particular, because it something without which the human mind cannot function.<sup>37</sup> Speech is necessary in order to form the concepts and representations about the world.<sup>38</sup> Yet speech is a social and normative faculty of human being, speech only arises from the social group of which an individual is a part.<sup>39</sup>

Individual insufficiency therefore implies that individuals are incapable of conceptualizing the world around them without their preexisting, socially granted faculty of speech.

Because human behavior is determined to some extent by how an agent represents and understands their environment, social nature must be a relevant consideration of human nature.<sup>40</sup>

To the above, Morgenthau adds, probably inspired by Hegel, an important condition arising from humanity’s social nature is that human beings need and seek *recognition* from peers.

“The individual seeks confirmation, on the part of his fellows, of the evaluation he puts

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<sup>34</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220. Lang Jr., Anthony. *Political Theory and International Affairs: Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*. (Westport: Praeger Paperback, 2004), 1099.

<sup>35</sup> For an elaboration, see Miller, Fred. “Aristotle’s Political Theory.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2002). <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/supplement3.html>, part of the article at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>.

<sup>36</sup> All three reasons derived from Fred Miller’s “Political Naturalism”; supplement to “Aristotle’s Political Theory.”

<sup>37</sup> Dupré, John. *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 29, 34-35.

<sup>38</sup> Dupré, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Dupré, 34-37.

<sup>40</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220; Dupré, 37.

upon himself...what others think about us is as important as what we actually are.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, recognition is a hermeneutic concept, which demands an individual transcend one’s solipsistic considerations of future actions and attempt to understand oneself from the perspective of the others. Agent’s predictions of social reception are confirmed by actual valuations of that agent by others. Thus, there is already a basic sociability and political interest at the heart of human being that leads to coordinated behavior, coordinated with a concern for “society” whatever that may be perceived to be.<sup>42</sup>

These “social” factors of human nature, namely speech, the drive for social recognition, and an inalienable political nature, all contribute to the formation of a consciousness of society and societal norms within an individual agent. Being innate, first nature contributes significantly to behavior; society, although they are not innate, is as relevant in contributing to behavior. Culture functions as a ‘second’ nature. Even if first nature was universal, it would be modified by the societal conditions in which an individual develops. ‘Second’ nature, as culture, is a system within which humans operate and it forms a framework of interpretation and has consequences for action.<sup>43</sup> ‘First’ nature is reconstructed according to the restraints of ‘second’ nature. Importantly, however, the degree to which second nature can affect human behavior as a whole are inherent to first nature.

An individual could hypothetically shape himself in a cultural vacuum, this hypothetical is moot because humans exist in a social environment by virtue of birth. “Humans must be social animals before they can be individuals – that is, before their powers can come to have the qualities of agency. Cultures precede and transcend individuals.”<sup>44</sup> Behavior is, in part, a function of the historical and social conditions of an agent in question, and these create and inculcate norms of behavior in an agent’s psychology as the agent is socialized according to those conditions; and thus second nature plays a relevant role in determining

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<sup>41</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 78, 86-100, 113; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 197-198. Cf. Brennan, Geoffrey. “Comment: What Might Rationality Fail to Do?” In *The Limits of Rationality*. Cook, and Levi (Eds.). (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 53.

<sup>42</sup> Recall that Morgenthau is a methodological individualist, so the abstraction society is something that exists within the minds of agents alone – although it does meaningfully shape their behavior from there.

<sup>43</sup> Warren, Mark. *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 51.

<sup>44</sup> Warren, 51.

that behavior.<sup>45</sup> In other words, Morgenthau would insist that “human conduct must be understood in historical, social, and cultural context”<sup>46</sup>; human beings are constituted by the externalities of their quotidian lives.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, as well as there being biological and psychological differentiation, there is also societal differentiation that also results in different behavior among agents.<sup>48</sup> To this extent, factual, empirical reality – and one’s interaction with that reality – are irreducible criterion for determining an individual’s (and his or her cultural unit’s) behavior. And the most important way that an individual can be determined is the way in which he or she is socialized or habituated by their social world – done through sanction and encouragement.

Although the self is a product of its drives, cultural plays a role in human behavior by suppressing or encouraging drives and modes of behavior, those that it deems valuable.<sup>49</sup> That is, culture or second nature develops those aspects of first nature which are considered to be valuable and worth developing while it simultaneously sublimates and represses those that are valueless or even immoral.<sup>50</sup> While culture is a second-order *phusis* in a way, it must always work within the confines of those drives of first nature – although they are malleable, they are not infinitely so. As a result, human nature can never exceed certain empirical limits of what humans are.<sup>51</sup> Cultural values can determine and press individuals in directions which are open because of the existence of those possibilities within their first-nature.

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<sup>45</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law.” *The American Journal of International Law*. (1940, 34.2), 273-274; Morgenthau, Hans J. *La Réalité des Normes, en Particulier des Normes du Droit International; Fondements d’une Théorie des Normes*. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934), 11-14; Bain, William. “Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered.” *Review of International Studies*. (2000, 26), 446.

<sup>46</sup> Bain, 446.

<sup>47</sup> Shilliam, Robert. “Morgenthau in Context: German Backwardness, German Intellectuals, and the Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project.” *European Journal of International Relations*. (2007, 13.3), 303-304.

<sup>48</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Twilight of International Morality.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1948, 58.2), 80. Cf. Warren, 9, 29.

<sup>49</sup> His wording here, “certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in another.” Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), 134.

<sup>50</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Twilight of International Morality.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1948, 58.2), 80.

<sup>51</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 97-98.

The unfortunate downside is two-fold: obviously drives of first nature are an insurmountable element of human nature. No agent can escape the pathos of human being. Moreover, second nature itself sets limits that cannot be overcome. Cultures, while more malleable than first nature, are still institutions with limits. Moreover, existing in a certain time or place further restricts (or opens) the horizons which are open to one. The possibilities for acting reflect the innumerable causes which have led up to the situation in which one finds his or her self with the possibility to choose.<sup>52</sup> The combination of these two elements imposes a certain element of fatality on human nature. Like first nature, second nature also imposes some degree of causal determinism upon one's behavior; there are essential properties that determine what future possibilities will be open to an agent.

## 2.1 Morality and Human Behavior

Morgenthau also believes that a fundamental aspect of human nature is morality. "Man happens to be a moral being who cannot operate on the basis of self-interest alone."<sup>53</sup> According to him, we have a sense of justice arising from our worldview and we are driven to act upon it.<sup>54</sup> He is not clear about how this occurs, exactly, but it seems logically to arise from the normative force of second nature: that is, language and culture are naturally normative, and the need for recognition reinforces an individual's motivation to conform to the standards laid out by one's culture. This drive seems conflict with the *animus dominandi*. In fact, the drive to dominate another's will (in order to manipulate or command them) seems to be completely antithetical to any sort of morality. This, however, doesn't seem to present any problems for Morgenthau, as he repeatedly references and contrasts both man's political nature (characterized by the predominance of the *animus dominandi* drive in nature) and moral nature.<sup>55</sup> Nor should it be, following the notion of a plurality of drives, and Nietzsche's suggestion, the cognitive dissonance arising from this

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<sup>52</sup> Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 133.

<sup>53</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "On Trying to be Just." *Commentary*. (1963, 35.5), 423.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 18; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168, 177; Morgenthau, *The Evil of Politics*, 5; Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 130.



contradiction is a problem of human reason not of factual reality – the two are naturally in conflict within an individual.

The assimilation of the social world through the perspectival affectations of an individual leads him or her to render judgments on the nature and value of things.<sup>56</sup> In other words, “The moral universe in which you operate depends on your basic worldview; once you have decided what the world is like, certain moral judgments follow with inevitability.”<sup>57</sup> Following from the effects of culture upon shaping one’s worldview, not to mention one’s individual interactions with the world, it is clear that second nature and individual perspective both contribute to shaping one’s worldview and therefore one’s morality. Two consequences follow from the individual’s tendency to evaluate the world according to norms. The first is that acts cannot be easily deprived of normative significance, even from the actor’s personal perspective.<sup>58</sup> Thus, in contrast to the notion that politics is (or ought to be) considered in a moral vacuum, Morgenthau explicitly states that *Salus publica suprema lex*, the idea that a state’s or actor’s self-interest is the only relevant rule of conduct, “has been literary rather than practical. Mankind has at all times refused to forgo ethical evaluation of political action.”<sup>59</sup> It is not even a question of whether or not human kind **ought** to forgo ethical evaluation, it is simply that humankind **does not** and **will not** do so. This is a result of an inherent judgmental mechanism, arising from one’s interpretive nature. While political action cannot be morally devoid, this is not to say that action must be moral. It simply means that one must be able to morally rationalize one’s actions. Justification is the necessary qualification of action.

The second consequence to follow from this is that individuals and groups tend to universalize their moral assessments – what an individual perceives to be as moral drives that individual to have it implemented as the just consequence.<sup>60</sup> Norm merely means what is normal, which also implies a ‘status quo’ conditional evaluation of how things ought to

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<sup>56</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168.

<sup>57</sup> Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*, 100.

<sup>58</sup> Morgenthau, “The Evil of Politics,” 5.

<sup>59</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 176.

<sup>60</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 11.

be. Thus, based upon judgments of how things are and how the nature of things is, conditions of how things ought to be also follow. Thus, norms are established through individual affectation and interpretation. Forgetting the conditional and interpretative nature of their empirical interaction, individuals assume that those moral judgments and interests must, of necessity, have universal application.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that these judgments may not ever be universal, just that there is no necessary causal relationship between the two.<sup>62</sup> Embracing Nietzsche's perspectivalism (or Arendt's plurality), Morgenthau says,

All of us look at the world and judge it from the vantage point of our interests. We judge and act as though we were at the center of the universe, as though what we see everybody must see, and as though what we want is legitimate in the eyes of justice. Turning Kant's categorical imperative upside down, we take it for granted that the standards of judgment and action, produced by the peculiarities of our perspective, can serve as universal laws for all mankind.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, an important aspect of second nature for Morgenthau is that human behavior is normative, both in attempting to conform to societal norms and in attempting to bring one's individual moral perspective to bear upon others in the name of justice – and these two attempts are hermeneutically related. In conclusion, Morgenthau has a notion of *phusis* in terms of agency, which can also be called first nature – that is the behavior of agents are, to some extent, a direct product of their physical being. In conclusion, Morgenthau has a notion of 'second nature,' which complements the 'first nature' of human behavior – that is the behavior of agents are, to some extent, a product of their social environment. What constitutes second nature is whatever social forces have become habituated, to whatever extent, in the psychology of the individual agent. The conclusions that second nature entail are the following:

1. Agents are coordinated by mores, norms, and laws of their particular social environment;

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<sup>61</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "On Trying to be Just." *Commentary*. (1963, 35.5), 422.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 15(Fifth Principle); Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 325-326; Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle's The Politics*, 111; Morgenthau, Hans J. "Human Rights and Foreign Policy." In *Herbert Butterfield: The Ethics of History and Politics*. Ed. Kenneth W. Thompson. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), 105

<sup>63</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. "On Trying to be Just." *Commentary*. (1963, 35.5), 422.

2. This condition limits the self-control an agent has – an agent is habituated to behave according to certain criteria (although these may be overcome through further habituation)
3. Agents have a social conception of themselves and desire to have a positive sense of themselves through this;
4. Agents have interests that extend beyond self-interest – which are social, and might be called moral motivations.
5. Agents are socially perspectival – reality is a product of the concepts available to interpret the sense data the agent has accumulated (and these concepts are necessarily socially informed, in particular by language), which are rooted in a particular place and time

### **3.0 The Interaction between First and Second Nature**

The above distinction between first and second nature is a conceptual one only – first and second nature are not independent, but encounter one another within every individual. Thus, they have the potential to not only interact, but conflict. To this end, second nature is something that can and has been used to manipulate first nature. For example, sexual drives, like rape and polygamy, which could otherwise be socially destabilizing and morally abhorrent, are restrained through cultural habituation. Second nature, however, can push too hard on first nature – if it is too repressive for enough drives, then it can be unhealthy for its constituents and become self-destructive, both for individuals and the culture itself. In other words, something has to give.

With this in mind, Morgenthau is able to propose some minimal sense of a second culture. He takes this upon himself because he wants to preserve liberalism but notices, drawing in particular on the example of Weimar, that liberalism is incapable of defending itself under certain conditions against powerful, politicized nationalist movements – in which liberalism reverts to fascism. Moreover, there is something about liberal culture, as second nature, that made other liberal states unable politically complacent against external threats both to

liberal ideals and liberal states. He suggests, in part, that this has to do with liberalism's quantitative/scientific and teleological tendencies. This is tied, in part, to the *animus dominandi* – that there is something in human nature that needs political expression and that liberalism not only does not provide for this, but renders individuals skeptical of government's value writ large.

### **3.1 Repressing First Nature: The *Animus Dominandi* and Liberalism**

Morgenthau asserts that there is, even if it is eclipsed by some other drives and social conditioning, within every person a drive for power. This drive for power may even be purely instrumental – in that power is sought for a different end like for the purposes of realizing justice. Given this, every individual seems to have some potential political nature; beyond one's natural sociability, there is some fundamental aspect of human being that is political. Moreover, this drive in particular seems to be agonal – that is, necessarily competitive and anti-egalitarian. If it is the case, then an inherently egalitarian second nature would naturally conflict with this aspect of first nature. Moreover, an inherently a-political second nature (insofar as it implicitly or explicitly discourages politics in favor of other pursuits, particularly economics), which liberalism seems to be by definition (minimal government with a focus on individualism and the private life), would further conflict with this aspect of human being.

Society naturally establishes ways to limit individual power drives, otherwise society fails. The crucial difference is whether society diverts (or sublimates) those drives into harmless channels and allows their moderated expression or whether these drives are suppressed altogether.<sup>64</sup> When combined with other external social problems, such as economic insecurity and anomie-inducing social atomization, frustrated power drives can be dangerous both domestically and internationally.<sup>65</sup> Given that first nature is naturally occurring, society cannot exorcise these drives (and other drives) altogether. Thus it is clear that certain social configurations, certain second natures, can be better or worse for the

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<sup>64</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 118, 247.

<sup>65</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 120; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

individuals within them depending on how a particular second nature interacts with the first nature.

### **3.1.1 *Hamartia*: Unintended Political Consequences of Liberalism**

Morgenthau, at his most Marxist, held that the triumph of liberalism was merely the triumph of an ideology (although he does not indicate that this was a bad thing to occur,<sup>66</sup> simply that he is able to recognize it for what it is).<sup>67</sup> This leads to a massive systemic shift in second nature. Moreover, Marxism, being simply a qualification added to the liberal conclusions drawn by Adam Smith,<sup>68</sup> does not change the behavior of those within such a culture in some significant ways, which will be outlined below.

Morgenthau, following Marx,<sup>69</sup> felt that liberalism was merely the triumph of one particular worldview or ideology – the bourgeois liberal ideology.<sup>70</sup> Although the term ideology and the accompanying description sounds pejorative, it should be understood merely as a reflective approach to a particular philosophy; it should be remembered that Morgenthau was a supporter of liberalism in general, so this critique should not be categorized with the contemporary attacks on liberalism.<sup>71</sup> Ideology seems to derived from the way in which Karl Mannheim uses it (and with whom Morgenthau was associated with)<sup>72</sup>; that is, ‘ideology’ entails a depiction of reality according to the perception of reality by the group making the description – and that this perception needs to be interpreted and understood according to the social situation, history, and interests of that

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<sup>66</sup> See Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Dilemmas of Freedom.” *The American Political Science Review*. (1957, 51.3) for example.

<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 19-23.

<sup>68</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> Marx, Karl. *The German Ideology*. In Tucker (sec.Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas). 1099.

<sup>70</sup> For the full presentation of Morgenthau’s argument on this, see Morgenthau, Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 19-40.

<sup>71</sup> Importantly, for Morgenthau, ideology will have transcendent claims (justification and appeal that are beyond mere self-interest). This is especially true of bourgeois liberalism, which, in its ideology, forwards claims to formalization of rights and law – which necessarily are egalitarian. This normative egalitarianism is one of liberalism’s greatest virtues, in fact.

<sup>72</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 34; “Fragments of an Intellectual Autobiography,” 14; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Thought and Action in Politics.” *Social Research*. (1971, 38.4), 157; Frei, 116-117, 150. Moreover, at points Morgenthau’s political analysis seems to draw upon Mannheim’s own political analysis in his *Ideology and Utopia*. Cf. 112-123 (“why is there no science of politics?”) with Morgenthau’s description of ideology in

group.<sup>73</sup> Liberalism, for Morgenthau, was historically “the main moral, intellectual, and political weapon of the rising middle classes...and [liberalism] has never lost the imprint of its historical origins.”<sup>74</sup> This historical imprint is the key to unlocking the ‘ideology’ driving liberalism’s adherents. Liberals appealed to rationalism as a weapon against the feudal system that preceded it – rationalism’s value and strength lay in the power that rational restraint provided for economic transactions in particular.<sup>75</sup> Rational law provided some degree of predictability in economic transactions, which guaranteed some possibility of long-term economic planning, which lead to economic success and power (and economic power, obviously, was instrumental in accumulating other types of power). Meanwhile, deviations from rationality led to economic failure.<sup>76</sup> The obvious good that came about from liberalism (beyond economics, this includes its normative egalitarianism (formalized law, equal consideration before the law, and universal rights) and its success in manipulating nature to the service of humanity) pushed its success even further, especially given its contrast with the decrepit and absurd feudal system that preceded it.

Liberalism rose to become the dominant ideology. However, the historical conditions that supported its rise (such as early capitalism and industrialism and the conflict between the middle classes and the aristocracy) changed. Liberals lost sight of the “historic relativity of all political philosophy, and [nineteenth century liberals] elevated the product of a unique historic and philosophic configuration into an immutable system of rational suppositions and postulates to be applied, regardless of historic conditions, everywhere and at all times.”<sup>77</sup> Although the intentions of liberalism, then and now, may be for the best and are likely the best available, there is an obvious problem. Once the historical grounds for liberalism are gone, it is foundationless – and its conceptualization of reality can completely miss the picture once events such as advanced or monopoly capitalism (non-competitive capitalism), political economy (the growing relationship between government

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<sup>73</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 97. Cf. Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. Trans Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 55-56, 204, 262.

<sup>74</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 19-20.

<sup>76</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 21.

<sup>77</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 20.

and economics), advanced bureaucracy and other forms of hyper-legal rationalization, advanced technology (such as media), mass democracy, social conflict (beyond proletariat and bourgeoisie), and globalization (which allow for foreign intervention into domestic economics) begin to take hold.<sup>78</sup> “Such a political philosophy could not fail to be out of tune with the realities of the situation wherever the essential conditions of its origin were absent.”<sup>79</sup> In fact, liberalism’s belief in the power of reason, Morgenthau states, is to reform politics by rationalizing all relations and undermining the irrational – such as power – by giving reason free reign and absolute power.<sup>80</sup> In addition, it seems to believe in the capacity of economic calculation to overrule all other considerations (i.e. the desire for economic gain coupled with the power of reason, will overrule alternative calculations (pride)).<sup>81</sup> Having lost sight of its historical origins and adopting a universalistic attitude regarding the just and its own capacity to address this, liberalism had become a full-blown ideology: for Morgenthau, liberalism held itself to be the victory of reason over unreason, made permanent through its obvious truth.

Morgenthau’s general assessment of liberalism is that it remained contingent upon certain factual, historical conditions – it is not able to transcend these. Importantly, these include competitive capitalism (as opposed to monopoly capitalism) and the low-level of bureaucratization of society and particularly government, and related to competitive capitalism, some basic levels of equality inherent to society (i.e. equality that is natural, rather than for example, welfare state enforced).<sup>82</sup> That liberals lost sight of its contingent nature meant that they no longer believed that liberalism was something that could be undone by virtue of its foundation in “reason,” and that liberalism did not need to be

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<sup>78</sup> This demands an elaboration that cannot be provided here, see Scheuerman, William. *Between the Exception and the Norm: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), and Scheuerman, William (Ed.). *The Rule of Law under Siege: Selected Essays of Franz L. Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>79</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 20.

<sup>80</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 28-29, 32.

<sup>81</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 43-46, 76-77,

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 433-439; Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Purpose of American Politics*. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 280; Morgenthau, “The Dilemmas of Freedom,” 722; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

defended against external threats.<sup>83</sup> This sort of cheerful optimism, to borrow a phrase from Nietzsche, left liberalism completely out of touch with reality. On a theoretical level, this ahistorical liberalism ultimately reflects a decline in politics as it is replaced on a theoretical level by science and an empirical level by economics.<sup>84</sup>

Liberalism's fundamental problem is that it seems to affect a disconnect between its constituents and government. This "public/private-divide" critique is not unique to Morgenthau, he shares it with Arendt, the Frankfurt School, and they all seem to arise genealogically from Hegel. The basic nature of this is that, as liberalism sets its priority on ensuring a freely operating private realm (in terms of individual values and exchange). To this extent, social and political involvement becomes concerned with one thing above all others – maintaining the status quo of minimal intervention into the private; concerns of social justice become entirely private affairs, and injustices are addressed there rather than on a systemic level.<sup>85</sup> In consequence, the government and politics begin to seem vestigial to liberal life, and the attitude of the demos begins to feed more into the notion of minimal government; after all, why should one support an institution that does next to nothing?<sup>86</sup> Politics becomes an extension of the struggle among privately powerful individuals to realize their economic interests; the "issues" are little more than economic interests and generally there is little disparity between competing parties over them.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the ability to affect politics increasingly becomes a function of one's ability to reach the masses through the media – thus the wealthy are the political. Conversely, the rise of monopoly capitalism endows corporations with an amazing power to manipulate the masses through the media and to manipulate the government through lobbying – all of which is mostly beyond the power of the government to meaningfully regulate.<sup>88</sup> While government's end is to restrict itself to the minimally necessary regulation of the private sphere, the growth of

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<sup>83</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 67, 90.

<sup>84</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 27-28, 32; Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 206.

<sup>85</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 199.

<sup>86</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 209, 220.

<sup>87</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 200.

<sup>88</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 280-287; Morgenthau, "The Dilemmas of Freedom," 721-723; Scheuerman, William. *Between the Exception and the Norm: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 1099; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122,



enormous concentrations of private economic power allow those private powers to have enormous influence over both the demos and the government.

Philosophies, policies, and general issues are beyond the concern of the demos, unless the media advances such a notion – but philosophies are complicated while economics is comparatively simple because it is more scientific and therefore held to be uncontroversially true.<sup>89</sup> “Political apathy joins social complacent. More of the same, improved and better distributed – this is the formula to which the popular mood seems to have reduced the purpose of America.”<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, as government becomes more an administrative device and the division of labor becomes more necessary, owing to spiraling social complexity, the government likewise becomes more bureaucratized.<sup>91</sup> The specialized knowledge that bureaucrats and technocrats need to be effective mean that, more and more, government’s higher functions become something accessible to only the most well-educated, who strongly correlate with the most well-off. Moreover, as bureaucrats their “business” is not publically accountable, and what is public is restricted by its specialized language, which one must have training in to be able to understand.<sup>92</sup> This creates a further divide between individuals and governance – issues seem to be more and more remote from public life. Therefore, the only meaningful change that individuals seek in government is its reduction (it is perceived to be a regulator of the social and nothing more – thus governance is just a matter of taxation and that should be kept to a minimum to allow maximum social being); government should not interfere except if one infringes upon another’s minimal private freedoms.<sup>93</sup> The end of government becomes the end of government. “This lack of interest in public issues leads of necessity to the contraction of the public sphere. It results in the cessation of genuine political activity by

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<sup>89</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 28-29, 32; Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 223-227; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099.

<sup>90</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 201.

<sup>91</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 204; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 436; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

<sup>92</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 204; Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 234-235, 247. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 1099.

<sup>93</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 204-205; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 123-124.

the citizen, the encroachment of private interests upon the public sphere, and the relative shrinkage of national resources, human and material, committed to public purposes.”<sup>94</sup>

This kind of liberal democratic culture has a further effect, as second nature it also affects the way in which individuals behave normatively. A culture that devalues the public, political realm while promoting the private, economic one is bound to also affect how individuals themselves feel about typically “political” values. Politics is ultimately about the struggle for values and what is right.<sup>95</sup> Because liberal culture denigrates truth to a matter of individual belief and sets the will of the majority of the ultimate values, political values, it means that any objective sense of excellence is cast aside in favor of a type of Protagorean-type value relativism – and what is right loses its value.<sup>96</sup> The notion of excellence is anti-egalitarian because it makes being the best into a virtue – and promoting someone to be better than what one is suggests that being what one is is not good enough.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the value of society, economic exchange, and the signifier of good exchange, capital accumulation, become the more general ends sought by society and virtues such as courage, moderation, and intelligence are denigrated if they are not in a service to the socially sanctioned ends.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, for Morgenthau, “the vision of human perfection, of all the excellences man is capable of, which carries man beyond the limits of his nature and makes him do the impossible and unforeseen, is blotted out by the utilitarian picture of a society whose members do not deviate too much from one another.”<sup>99</sup> Political virtues are cast aside by a liberal democratic culture that can only recognize the accumulated quantities to be had through private exchange.

Morgenthau’s point, in sum, is that liberal democratic culture discourages the public pursuit of excellence and virtue, a difficult enough task, by first providing no positive reason to pursue them and further discourages these values for their anti-egalitarianism orientation – recognition of one’s virtuosity implies setting them above others. The problem is that

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<sup>94</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 203. Cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 102.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 117, 124.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

<sup>97</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 237; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 222.

<sup>98</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 228-229

<sup>99</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 229.

political expression is a necessary aspect of human being, insofar as humans are moral and driven by the *animus dominandi*. (these two forces seem to mutually exclude one another, and yet both are inherently social and both have strong normative implications for that). Political virtues are merely the normatively positive manifestation of these drives. In this, Morgenthau seems to be pointing at agonal competition. He suggests that without a sphere for individuals to express their *animus dominandi*, this unexpressed/repressed drive exerts itself on the nation level unless it can be sublimated by economic gratification – bought out in a sense.<sup>100</sup> This possibility, however, exists only as long as the economy can provide sublimation to the majority of its constituents (sustain a large middle class), and every economy eventually must recede no matter how skilled the fiscal and monetary policy technocrats are. Nationalistic explosions seem to be the only egalitarian ways to satisfy a demos desire for recognition of self-worth and excellence without economic opiates.<sup>101</sup>

### **3.1.2 *Hamartia*: Weimar as a Case Study of Liberalism's Limits**

This would be embodied most importantly in the events preceding the Second World War: domestically in the collapse of several liberal democracies in Europe to fascism and internationally in the policy responses of the other liberal democracies. In particular, the liberal Weimar Republic was utterly helpless to deal with the dual threat of anti-liberal and anti-industrial communism, on the one hand, and the alliance of private economic power and public organization, on the other. This came from a plethora of factors, but the most significant ones were the Treaty of Versailles and the economic downturn, culminating in the global economic depression.<sup>102</sup> The Treaty of Versailles crippled Germany, it reduced the status of Germany to shameful state, such as its national sentiment/sense of pride, its foreign status (in admitting its “war guilt”), its army, its economy, its reparations.<sup>103</sup> As the economic conditions in Germany grew increasingly more desperate, especially for the ‘proletarized’ middle classes, and as their social status remained negative, Germans became

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<sup>100</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 124; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 222-223.

<sup>101</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 146.

<sup>102</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 123-124.

<sup>103</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 123, 124; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 250, 254; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

increasingly frustrated.<sup>104</sup> Finally, there was a general sense of insecurity – internal and external.<sup>105</sup> This frustration could only be suppressed for so long before it exploded violently in the forms of militant communism, Nazism, and world war – all driven, according to Morgenthau, by the need for a sense of self-worth and also by self-interest. Yet, mass movements are prone to manipulation by charismatic leaders. It was Hitler and his elites who were able to harness and direct the frustrated individuals as they desired, but in such a way so that the nation could resolve their frustration and restore some sense of worth and recognition through this.<sup>106</sup>

Liberalism ceased to be a value once its *raison d'être*, laissez faire economic cooperation and gain, ceased to produce that. It offered no meaningful political expression to the masses whom advanced capitalism had failed because of the disconnect (perceived and real) between them and their government. Finally, its moral code is bounded in a strict deontology that coordinates the just with the law, even if the law is perceived to be or really is causing or allowing through inaction injustice. Thus, in the end, once economics ceases to be successful as an outlet for individuals' frustrations, liberalism has no other outlets to provide individuals with. Finally, it guarantees to itself by law the possibility to destroy itself (to abrogate the constitution).<sup>107</sup> This condition of existential frustration and the possibility for liberalism to commit suicide was aggravated by private economic power to manipulate public affairs (as major corporations accumulated economic power that could rival the government, government was increasingly forced to their subservience to maintain its role as acting in the common interest), the power of media to manipulate undemocratically mass psychology, and the sense that the rule of law was no longer serving justice but was actually inhibiting it through bureaucratic restraint and the manipulability of this by those with the means to do so (the upper classes). This all allowed for the middle classes to move toward and help in the rise of fascism.<sup>108</sup> The frustrated individuals saw

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<sup>104</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 123, 124; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 250. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 122.

<sup>105</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 123; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 250.

<sup>106</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 228-229; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 111, 124.

<sup>107</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 251.

<sup>108</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 250.

hope for a sense of self-worth by subsuming their sense of self into the transcendental nation and released those “political” energies.<sup>109</sup>

The expression of drives, either through sublimation or through direct expression, is a necessary part of being an individual human being – it is a part of one’s nature and can be suppressed but not severed away. Clearly, Morgenthau was worried that frustrated individual drives would lead to social instability in the form of collective uprisings (internally and/or externally directed), and in the case of Weimar Germany this led to world war and genocide. While he seems to tacitly admit that economics can sublimate these drives, this ability is contingent on continued economic success. However, economics runs in cycles, which include recessions and even depressions. For Morgenthau, liberalism seemed to be entirely dependent on economic well-being for it to effectively sublimate other drives, including the political *animus dominandi*, and, when economic conditions turned bad enough, these drives found violent expression that liberalism could neither channel nor hold back. Politically, this means that, if the demos is not able to sublimate their individual drives, their collective frustrations are apt to be manipulated by expert powers – to preserve both democracy and itself, liberalism needs a further defense. However, it is clear that the demos must be able to sublimate their drives, including the *animus dominandi*, if they are to be able to make intelligent political decisions. Otherwise, they have the potential to revert to an enraged mob and repeat the Weimar catastrophe. To promote a healthy individual disposition, culture is the mechanism that humanity has relied on: what would assist liberalism is a culture that teaches individuals within the demos how to control and sublimate their more explosive drives – rather than ignoring this as liberalism had. That is, a healthy culture might include some sense of self-control coupled with political expression if it is to have any normative aspirations.<sup>110</sup> A classically liberal culture

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<sup>109</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 233; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 123, 125; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 103.

<sup>110</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 7.

leaves the private world entirely open to this because it discourages and alienates the demos from the public.<sup>111</sup>

Liberal political culture does not provide for a public, political culture, instead it is centered around the promotion of a private, economic culture.<sup>112</sup> This approach to politics was successful historically, but those historical conditions disappeared and as liberal adherents attempted to universalize the ideology of liberalism, losing sight of what was a historically grounded possibility. This lack of concern for politics came at the expense of political drives and a culture that could educate political drives was absent. As liberalism discourages political involvement through inaction, politics becomes more distant from a liberal demos and, if an economic way of life proves unsatisfactory or insufficient, a “private” oriented liberalism may find itself in jeopardy.

### **3.2 Second Nature: The Sublimation and Promotion of First Nature**

Through norms, which promote and repress certain drives, culture, or second nature, shapes affects behavior as a whole, but this is against first nature. Thus, second nature reshapes first nature by repressing or promoting certain drives. These norms can also be called virtues. Drawing from the above description of liberalism, it is also clear that Morgenthau thought that, by repressing drives too much or promoting unhealthy drives, a culture could cause politically catastrophic consequences.<sup>113</sup> That is, if a culture was too oppressive for its constituents (either through its own fault or through external means (such as the Weimar culture), then that culture could potentially be destabilizing for the world. Culture’s relevance to stability within and without a domain lies in how it interacts with the biology and psychology of its constituents.

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<sup>111</sup> Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 197-201; Morgenthau, “The Dilemmas of Freedom,” 721; Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 38-49, 59

<sup>112</sup> Conversely, Morgenthau presents the same pathology from the opposite side in his critique of totalitarianism: a totalitarian society is one in which the private sphere is completely absent and suffers a similarly debilitating way of life for its constituents. Cf. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 51-55; Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 204-205.

<sup>113</sup> Culture that is detrimental to life either rejects the phenomenal world altogether or accepts it, but accepts nihilism (i.e. rejects the phenomenal world without a metaphysical comfort).

In its measures of strength every age also possesses a measure for what virtues are permitted and forbidden to it. Either it has the virtues of *ascending* life: then it will resist from the profoundest depths the virtues of declining life. Or the age itself represents declining life: then it also requires the virtues of decline, then it hates everything that justifies itself solely out of abundance, out of the overflowing riches of strength. Aesthetics is tied indissolubly to these biological presuppositions: there is an aesthetics of *decadence*, and there is a *classical* aesthetics – the “beautiful in itself” is a figment of the imagination, like all of idealism. —<sup>114</sup>

Culture, as the establishment and promotion of virtues, is the way to liberate oneself, through cultivating self-knowledge and self-control, from the solipsistic tyrannical chaos of biological and psychological drives. As Nietzsche says (and which Morgenthau once read obsessively), “A living thing can be healthy, strong, and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon.”<sup>115</sup> Obviously, the better the horizon delimiting the individual, the better the individual will become. Culture assists in delimiting individuals’ horizons so that they may operate within a more easily cognizable knowledge framework. Civilization, etymologically linked to ‘cultivation,’ in the sense of agriculture, seems very much to be the appropriate term for the role ‘second’ nature plays in human nature.

The role culture should then adopt is a second order one based upon cultivating a knowledge so that the self can cultivate itself, *insofar as peace and stability are the goals*. Morgenthau points to three factors that culture can do to help bring order to first nature among individuals and prevent the disruptions to peace and stability that first nature can represent: “social pressure which is able to contain the selfish tendencies of human nature within socially tolerable bounds; conditions of life creating a social equilibrium which tends to minimize the psychological causes of social conflict, such as insecurity, fear, and aggressiveness; and, finally, a moral climate which allows man to expect at least an approximation to justice here and now and thus offers a substitute for strife as a means to achieve justice” – that is, second nature constraining first nature, a minimum sense of

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<sup>114</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 159.

<sup>115</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. “On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life,” In *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Sec. 1, p. 63.

security for individuals (such as economic and social security), and some minimal sense that justice is not just a matter for god.<sup>116</sup>

Culture's role should be to teach an individual how to control and develop the explosive and destructive drives within, so that the individual can achieve a fullness of life appropriate to his or her particularity and so as to allow for these drives to safely sublimate – rather than come out explosively as they have in the past.<sup>117</sup> To have self-control, in effect to be able to command oneself, one must first know the self that is to be commanded (one must have self-knowledge).<sup>118</sup> Through self-knowledge, one can understand how best to organize the chaos of drives within oneself in order to promote their life must effectively.<sup>119</sup> How the coherence is achieved is a matter of question.<sup>120</sup> Self-knowledge does not arise automatically, and it is a difficult path. Our drives are not 'naturally' ordered and, moreover, self-knowledge and self-control is an unattainable ideal given the intransparency of the self. But this ideal can be striven for, as Kaufmann comments on Nietzsche:

Our impulses are in a state of chaos... No man can live without bringing some order into this chaos. This may be done by thoroughly weakening the whole organism or by repudiating and repressing many of the impulses: but the result in that case is not a "harmony," and the physis is castrated, not "improved." Yet, there is another way – namely, to "organize the chaos": sublimation allows for the achievement of an organic harmony and leads to that culture which is truly a transfigured physis.<sup>121</sup>

Culture is essential for understanding how drives are shaped because everyone is a product of some culture. Culture improves the *physis*; culture is an improved *physis*.<sup>122</sup> And it does this by pinning drives against one another and developing an agent's sense over what is at

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<sup>116</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 217

<sup>117</sup> Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 224.

<sup>118</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 107; Nietzsche, "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life," Sec. 9, p. 122.

<sup>119</sup> Nietzsche, "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life," Sec. 9, p. 122-123; Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 125.

<sup>120</sup> It depends upon a number of factors. One important factor, which affects everyone from birth, is the metaphysics one's culture assumes, which obviously will positively value certain drives and behaviors while devaluing others.

<sup>121</sup> Kaufmann, 227.

<sup>122</sup> Nietzsche, "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life," Sec. 9, p. 123.



heart. Morgenthau seems to be suggesting that, insofar as peace and social stability are values, then *sophrosune*, or self-control and moderation, is a virtue that culture needs to inculcate in its constituents – the ability to counteract first nature.<sup>123</sup> Politically, this virtue is essential.<sup>124</sup> But this may be merely a prelude for further virtues. A scientific culture, on the other hand, engenders exactly the *hubris*, the ultimately lack of self-control and lack of respect for limits, that drives humanity toward catastrophe.<sup>125</sup>

Given this, the question naturally arises: what culture might improve the *phusis* best (insofar as one seeks to meet the conditions for stability outlined above and work to avoid the fate of a state such as Weimar)?<sup>126</sup> It would be one that provides the grounds for individuals to realize some sense of control over one's self and one's fate (one's agency, in a way), as well as one that sublimates/overcomes those unhealthy and ignoble drives.<sup>127</sup> This allows for individuals, the antidote to an uncontrollable mob, and it allows for the mob to channel its negative drives into innocuous activities instead of things such as revolves. The culture that best achieves this is one that affirms “aesthetic” reality, as suggested by Nietzsche:

In its measures of strength every age also possesses a measure for what virtues are permitted and forbidden to it. Either it has the virtues of *ascending* life: then it will resist from the profoundest depths the virtues of declining life. Or the age itself represents declining life: then it also requires the virtues of decline, then it hates everything that justifies itself solely out of abundance, out of the overflowing riches of strength. Aesthetics is tied indissolubly to these biological presuppositions: there is an aesthetics of *decadence*, and there is a *classical* aesthetics – the “beautiful in itself” is a figment of the imagination, like all of idealism. –<sup>128</sup>

Aesthetics is tied to a culture's promotion of virtue and value. For Nietzsche, culture that is detrimental to life is that which is dismissive of particular phenomenon in themselves but stresses instead the abstract nature of those phenomenon, the noumenon or form that cannot

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<sup>123</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 207-208; Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 325-326. Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 120-121.

<sup>124</sup> Morgenthau, *Truth and Power*, 143

<sup>125</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 208, 222; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 51, 247.

<sup>126</sup> This is a minimal condition – there is still a tremendous space for diversity within this condition.

<sup>127</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 217

<sup>128</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 159.

be grasped through the senses.<sup>129</sup> Hence his stress upon the aesthetics that a culture values. Of course, this quotation from above can be related to the decline of Greek culture and tragic art, for it was only at the decline of Greek civilization that they no longer appreciated tragedy (and art in general, if one follows Socrates suggestion to ban the imitative arts in the Republic).<sup>130</sup> It is clear that Morgenthau felt the same way when he wrote, “The lack of tragic art in our age is but another manifestation of the rationalist unawareness of the tragic element in life”<sup>131</sup>; which is another way of saying that an inability to recognize the value and truth in tragic art is an indication of an inability to grasp some essential aspect of reality itself. Moreover, he repeatedly draws parallels between modern art and modern, scientific politics.<sup>132</sup>

Culture is very much a part of human nature – it affects how its constituent human beings behave and interact. Recognizing and understanding the contradicted and limited nature of being human while simultaneously providing the means for the release of these contradictory drives is an important role for culture to play if it is to achieve stability and healthy constituents and avoid the outcome of states like Weimar.<sup>133</sup>

#### 4.0 Human Nature and Politics

Morgenthau’s positive account of human nature is difficult to arrive to. It is clear, however, that he did not think that the *animus dominandi* was the center of human behavior. Instead, human behavior is a product of different biological and psychological drives that constitute first nature. In addition to this, a human being’s culture is also constitutive of their behavior because it works by promoting or repressing drives. The relevance of the *animus dominandi* is its political nature. While it is not necessarily dominating in an individual, if it cannot be sublimated on a societal level it can result in explosions. Moreover, individuals who are

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<sup>129</sup> Hence his rephrasing Kant’s *ding an sich* as *schönes an sich*

<sup>130</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1099.

<sup>131</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 207.

<sup>132</sup> Morgenthau, *Decline of Democratic Politics*, 33, 45-46; Lang, *Hans J Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*, 1099; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 30, 207; Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 227-228.

<sup>133</sup> Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, 187.

able to attain large levels of power, who are dominated by this drive, can represent a different type of threat to peace and stability.

It is clear from this chapter and the one preceding it that Morgenthau rejects the idea of a singular universal human nature. A human being cannot be divorced from its biological, psychological, or cultural (first and second nature), and because these do not manifest identically in every human and because this results in relevantly diverse actions and reactions, an account of human nature must accept that no fixed nature can be assigned to human being. This means that scientific accounts of human nature, such as rational choice theory, are problematic as explanatory or normative devices. This is because a non-universal nature defies the application of scientific method (it is not formal, it defies causal explanations, and it is not repeatable). The non-universality of human nature, from the above critique, means that a formal account of human behavior is not possible. Causal explanations are problematic because of the intransparency of the self and because of the human tendency to rationalize ex post facto. Repeatability is difficult for these same reasons. Human beings are individuals.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the only way to account for social phenomena is through the collected action of individuals, following Morgenthau's methodological individualism.

Although Morgenthau's account of human nature leads him to some normative conclusions about society and what is appropriate for human nature, it is unclear how this account relates to a notion of politics and especially foreign policy that he outlines in *Politics among Nations* as political realism. This account of human nature and morality seems to lead Morgenthau into an impasse in terms of politics, especially foreign politics: social phenomena are a product of individual human actions, human beings are relevantly distinct owing to divergences in their first and second natures, and scientific formulae cannot be applied to their actions, either in an explanatory or in a normative fashion. This seems pessimistic and is suggestive that any theory of politics is utterly worthless, because theory

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<sup>134</sup> Moreover, if human beings are relevantly particularistic owing to different natures, then any universalistic account will be reflective more of some prevailing ideology, rather than the prevalence of 'truth.' Nietzsche demonstrates this with the example of Cornaro's diet. In Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed./Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1982), 492-493.

is de facto a conceptual generalization of some field. Yet at the same time, Morgenthau intends to create a rational theory of politics. While his critique seems useful as a negative approach to another theory, it is unclear still what positive value such a foundation to a theory could have. A link between his foundations and his more well-known theory of political realism is still missing.

## V: Defending Morgenthau's 'Tragic Understanding'

The Stranger: "The differences of men and actions, and the endless irregular movements of human things, do not admit of any universal and simple rule. And no art whatsoever can lay down a rule which will last for all time...But the law is always striving to make one; -like an obstinate and ignorant tyrant, who will not allow anything to be done contrary to his appointment, or any question to be asked -not even in sudden changes of circumstances, when something happens to be better than what he commanded for someone...A perfectly simple principle can never be applied to a state of things which is the reverse of simple."

– Plato's *Statesman*

Reading Hans Morgenthau reveals that he believed "political science" is a conceptual oxymoron; politics cannot be understood according to scientific method because of an inherent categorical difference in how politics differs significantly from the means with which science is able to analyze objects of study when it approaches them. In other words, scientific method, when applied to politics, has a conceptual blind spot toward politics (and perhaps objects of study) and, as such, it fundamentally misunderstands how politics functions. A science of politics signifies attempts to approach politics as if it were characterizable by universal pre-conceptions, like rules and laws. However, science *cannot* provide a basis for political action, because it attempts to subsume some thing intrinsically *particular* under inflexible *universals*; a science of politics attempts to subsume all future actions without regard for their concrete particularity and this rigid subsumption can lead to incorrect prescription on what action is needed.

The epistemological approach most appropriate to politics resembles Aristotle's *phronesis*: the knowledge of how to prioritize desirable yet possibly irreconcilable ends and how to determine which acts are best and most likely to succeed to realize those ends, and these possibilities must be deliberated about and judged because universalistic normative laws must be interpreted relative to the real, particular context in which an actor finds herself. Because of this particular nature, politics is inherently 'aesthetic' because the empirical or phenomenal context is vital to it. However, aestheticization should not be equated with the

trivialization of politics. Morgenthau meant it to oppose a strict science of politics – a trend he witnessed at the University of Chicago. It identifies politics as a broad form of art, because politics is interested and directed action, as opposed to disinterested thought. An aesthetic model of politics provides a basis for action appropriate to given particular circumstances because it does not admit of predetermination, instead demanding concretization of and deliberation over any given political circumstance without attempting to subsume it under some universal. Moreover, this recognizes that the presence or absence of a particular element does not characterize a political reality. Politics is characterized as tragic because tragedy is the most appropriate recognition (or mimesis) of the specific characteristics that political action *actually* exhibits. A ‘tragic understanding’ best recognizes the real limits and inherent difficulties in understanding how particulars are and how one can best act politically within them.

Morgenthau’s realist project, spanning his political works, can be read in light of this tragic aestheticization of politics and, by probing into his neglected metaphysics<sup>1</sup>, one can better contextualize his often-misunderstood realist project and begin to reconcile some of the seeming contradictions and problems inherent to it. However, the reasons for art and tragedy to be foundational in Morgenthau’s realism are unclear and need to be flushed out if they are to be understood. The greatest problem for understanding the reasons behind identifying politics, art, and tragedy are largely unaddressed in Morgenthau’s writings. Despite this, it seems possible to understand a possible reasoning for it through a careful reading of Morgenthau and an investigation into his intellectual foundations, which provide more clues than he himself did. An approach that characterizes a scientific understanding of politics as ‘disadvantageous’ is best understood when mapped in a Nietzschean framework – but Nietzsche is insufficient for rebuilding a meaningful political understanding and Morgenthau resorts to Aristotle to further this aestheticization. It is within this framework

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<sup>1</sup> These are the a priori assumed Machiavellian metaphysics. However, if Morgenthau does reject ‘political science’ and defines a characteristic of politics as an incapacity to be rationally codified as a universal law – and consequently prescriptions for decision-makers – then he relevantly departs from Machiavellian scientism, which states “the only real concern of the political ruler is the acquisition and maintenance of power” (Nederman, Cary. Niccolò Machiavelli. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/machiavelli/>).

that Morgenthau's notions of aesthetic politics and tragedy, as the grounding for his political realist project, will be shown to originate.

This article will open by briefly outlining a critique of Morgenthau's tragic understanding made by Rengger and Oakeshott, because this critique highlights some important weaknesses of a tragic political metaphysics and thus what needs the most development to have a viable tragic metaphysics in contemporary political theory. To answer to this critique, a historical perspective on tragedy and philosophy, which highlights the theoretical roots of tragedy and aestheticization in the works from which Morgenthau would have drawn, reveals some groundwork for the philosophical soundness and necessity of a tragic aestheticization of politics. After the philosophical groundwork, the article will move to elaborate on what the full understanding of the relation between art and politics entailed exactly for Morgenthau's realism: namely, that politics cannot be a science, as science is a series of abstract and universal laws that can be applied directly to concrete circumstances without taking account of variations peripheral to what the laws describe. Against this, politics as an art says politics, because it is action, must always take into account the fullness of particular circumstances, an approach that resists scientific rule formulations. Following this, the Aristotelian political virtue of *phronesis*, which is consistent with the understanding of politics as an art, becomes relevant to understanding how one should understand how to act in light of politics aesthetic nature. This virtue of thought is then shown to be textually integral to Morgenthau's political realism. Finally, after making the connection between politics, art, and *phronesis*, the relevance of tragedy is laid forth by describing exactly what characteristics politics reveals once it is aestheticized. Tragic art, in the narrow sense of art, is an imitation of some potentially real events which best represents the difficulties of applying the virtue of *phronesis* to real situations of political import.

Adopting Morgenthau as a guide serves the elucidation of this aestheticization of politics because of Morgenthau's lasting influence in politics. However, while Morgenthau is still an important theorist for politics, his political realism seems to be divorced from his aesthetic, tragic, and decidedly unscientific political metaphysics, except in occasional

instances,<sup>2</sup> but should not be, given Morgenthau's insistence upon this claim, even against strong objections, from Michael Oakeshott for example. A development of Morgenthau's tragic understanding of politics for political theory and an attempt to ground it within the larger framework of his political realism should have profound consequences for realism and political theory in general, given his status as the godfather of realism. Namely, that many of the contemporary understandings of realism, and the critiques of them, have missed some vital directions for politics left by Morgenthau. This is especially pertinent if the neo-realist formulation was made to make politics more scientific (or even scientific) then it was under 'classical' realism.<sup>3</sup> Such a development would also show that Morgenthau's work, some 50 years after for some publications, still have original contributions to make to international political theory. In closing, this article will be limited to elucidating Morgenthau's (tragic) aestheticization of politics as a foundational step for the intended metaphysical recontextualization and reorientation of political realism that does not deny the substantive work Morgenthau forwarded; as such, this analysis is not intended to refute criticism on its own grounds, but to show that his tragic understanding is more profound than has thus far been granted.

## 1.0 Morgenthau's Blindness? Tragedy and Existence as Two Distinct Spheres

A main thesis of Morgenthau's *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* is that, contrary to contemporary approaches to political studies, politics is not susceptible to scientific-type knowledge or reasoning. This is due to categorical differences between how the objects of scientific method are and how politics is. Succinctly put, "Politics must be understood through reason, yet it is not in reason that it finds its model. The principles of scientific reason are always simple, consistent, and abstract; the social world is always complicated,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Williams, Michael C. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Lebow, Richard Ned. *The Tragic Vision of Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Gismondi, Mark. "Tragedy, Realism, and Postmodernity. *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. (2004, 15.3).

<sup>3</sup> Guzzini, Stefano. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 187.



incongruous, and concrete”, and he concludes, “politics is an art, and not a science, and what is required for its mastery is not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and the moral strength of the statesman.”<sup>4</sup> The critique of scientism or rationalism in politics was part of a broader project of his, and he was not alone in making it. In a review of Morgenthau’s book, philosopher Michael Oakeshott seems to concur with Morgenthau, at least in part: “Oakeshott accepts the general thrust of Morgenthau’s argument in *Scientific Man*... To this extent, Morgenthau and Oakeshott are allies in criticizing the progressivist, scientific character of the assumptions that drive modernity.”<sup>5</sup> Both agreed, and for similar reasons, that the notion of political science, as a rationalized enterprise, was not correct, and that the application of scientism to politics was more likely to be dangerous to peace and stability.<sup>6</sup>

There was, however, one vital point that was disconcerting for Oakeshott: the presence of non-political notions, especially art and tragedy, in political analysis. Morgenthau’s above claim that about politics and art violates Oakeshott’s modality by smuggling aesthetic analysis into politics.<sup>7</sup> Aesthetics jeopardize political rationality with non-political evaluative types. Morgenthau furthers the aesthetic foundations for his political analysis, however, essentially claiming that what is essential for any ‘statesman,’ is to embrace recognition of the tragic condition of human life. Tragedy as merely an aesthetic quality, for Oakeshott, and did not apply to practical life (politics) as such.<sup>8</sup> Morgenthau, however, was obstinate and insisted, “the tragic is a quality of existence, not a creation of art.”<sup>9</sup> This suggests the degree of importance that Morgenthau considered tragedy to have for politics: omitting tragedy and art would compromise politics itself – they were something integral to his realist project.

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<sup>4</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Rengger, Nicholas. “Realism, Tragedy and the Anti-Pelagian Imagination in International Political Thought.” In *Realism Reconsidered* (forthcoming). Ed. Michael C. Williams. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 128.

<sup>6</sup> Oakeshott, Michael. “Scientific Politics.” In *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life*. Ed. Timothy Fuller. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 98-100.

<sup>7</sup> Oakeshott’s modality is a theoretical delimitation of different types of analysis. Rengger succinctly describes this as “different modes of human experience—as for example practical life and aesthetics—could not directly blend with one another.” (Rengger, 129).

<sup>8</sup> Rengger, 127, 129.

<sup>9</sup> Morgenthau, letter to Oakeshott 22 May 1948. Hans J. Morgenthau Papers. Box B44.

However, Morgenthau did not ground or take this claim any further. Continued probing by Rengger, drawing from Oakeshott, suggests that ‘tragic’ politics smuggles aesthetic evaluative criteria into political analysis, and this risks the very idealism that political realism intends to avoid.<sup>10</sup> This idealism is the incorporation of impractical political aims, the pursuit of which endangers the stability of international relations and the survival of some of its actors. In the end, then, tragedy has the same potential for utopianism that it seeks to prevent: if politics is ‘tragically’ sad, this implies that there is a possibility to change what reality *de facto* is, and this is inconsistent with the initial premise of realism.<sup>11</sup> Oakeshott says, “only a rationalistic reformer will confuse the imperfections which can be remedied with the so-called imperfections which cannot, and will think of the irremovability of the latter as a tragedy.”<sup>12</sup> The reason why Oakeshott has his strict separation of other spheres, such as aesthetics, from politics is to delimit conceptually such idealism from politics, thereby denying it any influence over political decision-making.

Thus, if I understood, the critique is essentially that Morgenthau’s task of forging a pure ‘political’ analysis is compromised when he integrates the notions of tragic art because it corrupts political practice with ‘utopian’ elements that have no practical relevance. To paraphrase, ‘How can Morgenthau’s realism create an autonomous sphere of political analysis – to prescribe what can be realistically accomplished in political action – if it smuggles in non-political evaluative criteria?’ It seems that, despite its explicit anti-progressivist intent, Morgenthau’s tragic understanding of existence and politics has an implicit, and unintended, progressivism. This can have negative consequences in prescribing political practice because it brings into political analysis criteria that have no practical relevance, deluding politics with its ‘non-political’ evaluations and obscuring what is possible with what would be ideal. Tragedy, as a romantic concept, doesn’t provide an accurate foundation for political practice. Existence is just Being, while tragedy is an aesthetic quality – perhaps applicable to Being, given the appropriate circumstances, but certainly inappropriate when it comes to practical thinking about changing political reality.

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<sup>10</sup> Rengger, 129-134.

<sup>11</sup> Rengger, 130-131.

<sup>12</sup> Oakeshott, 107-108.

## 2.0 Broadening the Horizon: Gymnasium and *The Birth of Tragedy*<sup>13</sup>

Morgenthau's affirmation of tragic as a quality of existence and politics' artistic character, flying in the face of Oakeshott's criticism, suggests that they play a far more important role in his realism than is typically considered. In fact, this could indicate that he is drawing from a more profound theory about existence and tragedy, albeit one left implicit.

Morgenthau's point was not just to object to scientism in politics (if it was, he could have merely accepted Oakeshott's criticism and kept this point), it included grounding politics solidly in these aesthetic and tragic notions. What is it, then, about tragedy that makes it more than just art and aesthetics, and that allows one to apply it directly to politics through existence?

To answer immediately the above question would be to jump ahead of ourselves, if we are to understand why this claim could make sense. Asking why existence is tragic only answer an issue resting upon a more fundamental claim Morgenthau made: that politics is an art. 'Tragic' merely classifies what kind of art politics is. Moreover, politics, in a broad sense, was an essential characteristic of human nature: an atomistic individual is insufficient to come into existence and sustain itself; the grander structure provided by society is necessary.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since political behavior is integral to existence and since politics is an art, it follows that existence is not just tragic but can be more generally qualified as 'aesthetic.' This, although necessary groundwork, does not clarify as much as cloud what Morgenthau attempted to say; therefore, some intellectual history will be important to situate things.

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<sup>13</sup> In the following, I do not intend to say that Morgenthau was merely a Nietzschean or an Aristotelian; he was clearly an original thinker in his own right. However, owing to the difficulty in grasping Morgenthau's philosophical foundation, situating him will aid in understanding him.

Although it is difficult to make specific citations because they are never so explicit, I would not have been able to articulate the following without drawing from Dana Villa's "Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action." *Political Theory*. (1992.20.2).

<sup>14</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220. Morgenthau explicitly accepts Aristotle's political naturalism.

Both Morgenthau and recent biographical work on him indicate that Nietzsche is a fruitful orientation to understand Morgenthau's philosophical core.<sup>15</sup> In a rare printed reference to Nietzsche, Morgenthau refers to *The Birth of Tragedy*.<sup>16</sup> There, he reiterates Nietzsche's insight into a link between tragic art and society. However, Morgenthau was also Aristotelian.<sup>17</sup> Thus, both Nietzsche and Aristotle may be helpful in laying the foundation for investigating this tragic understanding.

The first step is to understand what exactly 'art' means: how (tragic) art was understood, in particular by Nietzsche, and how this came to influence his philosophy. In general, the contemporary use of the term 'art' in politics seems to have a narrow definition and is restricted to what appears on stage or in museums.<sup>18</sup> However, art need not be so narrow a category. Aristotle (implicitly) differentiates between two different 'arts': art in that narrow sense is discussed in his *Poetics* while art (as *techne*, or skill at some craft) is discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even in English, art is, above all, defined in this broad sense as "skill; its display or application."<sup>19</sup> Two subsequent definitions further this: "skill in doing anything as the result of knowledge and practice" and "human skill as an agent, human workmanship. Opposed to *nature*."<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche understood art along those lines; art entails an ability to bring forth.<sup>21</sup> Art is a process, and that which is brought forth manifests either as a product or an act (from the Greek distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*). Art, in the broad sense, is a creative project to bring some thing forth, not of necessity material.

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<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau, in 1926 at age 22, began devouring the complete work of Nietzsche ("the god of my youth"; Frei, 98) and recognized an intellectual debt to him throughout his career. (Thompson, Kenneth W., and Robert J. Myers (eds.). *Truth and Tragedy*. (Washington: New Republic Book Co., 1977), 7-16 and Frei, Christoph. *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 93-113).

<sup>16</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1972), 38.

<sup>17</sup> Molloy, M. Benjamin. *Power and Transcendence*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), xi-xiii. Frei, 113.

Lang, Anthony. *Political Theory and International Affairs*. (Westport: Praeger Paperback, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Lebow, however, does not use it in this sense, defining it as a "situationally specific political art form." Cf. Lebow. *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 363-365, 375-376, 379-380.

<sup>19</sup> This is the first entry on art in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>20</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), aphorism 797 (p. 419). Cf. Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche. Volume 1: The Will to Power as Art*. Trans David Farrell Krell. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 69-71, more generally see 69-75, 77-82.

Moreover, even art in the narrow sense has a substantial relation to ‘practical reality.’ Aristotle defined this narrow art as imitation (*mimesis*) of reality<sup>22</sup> – and thus art is an (idealized) imitation of what actually occurs in the ‘real’ world. He says, “Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude.”<sup>23</sup> He elaborates, “Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.”<sup>24</sup> Although it imitates only action, in doing so, tragedy adopts idealized humans as its actors.<sup>25</sup> Importantly, tragedy is not supernatural in this idealization. Instead, it shows that even the noblest, wisest, and most well-intentioned individuals (those most capable of success) are susceptible to *hubris* and catastrophe – i.e. no one is exempt, without exception. If the function of tragic art is to imitate real action and display its pathological potential, which corresponds to the problems presented by the current international relations discussion, it seems that tragic art is related to politics in a way beyond utility. It imitates what arises in *real* political decision-making.

Nietzsche further analyzes the ‘tragic’ imitation of reality – tragic peripeteia imitates the utter futility to significantly affect the unfolding events in the world and bring about some desired reality.<sup>26</sup> Acting toward a certain end means that, due to the unforeseen yet inevitable, one can paradoxically undermine the very purpose sought. Take Sophocles’ Oedipus, “the noble human being who, in spite of his wisdom, is destined to error and misery.”<sup>27</sup> Oedipus’ attempts to circumvent his dire prophesy are futile – despite his positive qualities, his ability to rationally affect and control the world was negligible. Oedipus was in over his head simply by existing. What Nietzsche’s tragic insight recognizes, then, is the very real pathological dimensions of intent, control, and outcome in action. Tragedy arises directly from the limits of being.

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<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, I (1447a15). <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, VI (1449b24-25).

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, VI (1450a16-19).

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, XV (1454b9). “Tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level.”

<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 60.

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 67.

The tragic insight, then, recognizes the futility of action to affect meaningful change, and “[such] knowledge kills action...[it] requires the veil of illusion.”<sup>28</sup> Knowledge, characterized by that insight into the truth of action’s impotence, should then, at the minimum, lead to inaction if not abject nihilism.<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche introduces a dichotomy between knowledge and action as ideal-types.<sup>30</sup> One can either act or have knowledge, but not both – or so it would seem.

The tragic insight is not, of necessity, utterly debilitating. Nietzsche provides an escape: art, above all tragic art, ‘approaches as a saving sorceress’ and overcomes this debilitating nausea – the aestheticization of action. Aestheticization of action means to conceive of action in terms of its immanent performative qualities. “[Aestheticized action] enables one to conceive of action as self-contained, as immanently valuable in its greatness or beauty.”<sup>31</sup> Life most consistent with the great and beautiful is one that possesses the tragic insight and moves ephemerally against it, attempting to assert meaning, as noble and beautiful living,<sup>32</sup> in the face of nihilism and a reality damned by god’s absence (*deus absconditus*) or death.<sup>33</sup> A particular action must be performed recognizing the possibility of its reversal and utter failure, but performed so that it can be justified virtuously – as having been attempted nobly, beautifully, with good intentions, and seeking the proper outcome. No other justification, such as it was willed by god, will suffice any longer. Therefore, not only is action ‘artistic’, but it must be accepted as such if action is to have value and remain possible. In other words, it is only by the aestheticization of action – moreover, aestheticization that includes the ‘tragic insight’ – that action can still be

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<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 59-60; also 98.

<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 59; for Nietzsche, knowledge’s “killing” of action is reality-inspired ‘nausea.’

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 59-60.

<sup>31</sup> Villa, “Beyond Good and Evil,” 276.

<sup>32</sup> Beauty and nobility should be understood in the (broader) classical sense of virtuosity. cf. Brobjer, Thomas H. “Nietzsche’s Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue.” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* (2003.26), 67, 70-74 and Daigle, Christine. “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics... Virtue Politics?” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*. (2006.32). 6-11.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 60.

possible. Accordingly, “superficial” existence is the only option one has to act in the face of the tragic insight without resorting to “sorry metaphysical comforts.”<sup>34</sup>

Acts, as long as they are purposive – directed toward realizing something through production or praxis, are artistic. Those ends sought after are selected by the will of the actor, the ‘artist’, based upon criteria of desirability. Moreover, the phenomenal realm, of necessity dependent upon the senses, is by definition aesthetic.<sup>35</sup> The empirical world is far from being an entity that transcends or can be described without reference to aesthetic qualities. The opposite holds; to adopt Nietzsche’s most famous dicta from *The Birth of Tragedy*, “for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world is eternally *justified*.”<sup>36</sup> Art grounds our phenomenal (‘aesthetic’) existence and instills it with value *in se*, without need for recourse to metaphysical justifications, justifications now without validity.<sup>37</sup> What guides action is the quality of the act itself – how it conforms to the promotion of an excellent, virtuous life.

### 3.0 The Movement to Aestheticize Politics against Scientism

Morgenthau’s assertions about politics, tragedy, and art are framed by this background. He claims succinctly “politics is an art, not a science.”<sup>38</sup> It seems a strange opposition; while the two are clearly dissimilar, it is not immediately apparent how art and science are polar opposites, in terms of politics, and how politics is more ‘art’ than ‘science.’

#### 3.1 ‘Politics’ versus ‘Science’

What is meant by ‘science’ is a series of consistent rules, which do not need to account for particular circumstances because they are properties inherent to the substances themselves.

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<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 42, 52. Cf. Villa, “Beyond Good and Evil,” 287-288; Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Heidegger, Martin. *Plato’s Sophist*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 64, 467.

<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 52. Cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 95-96, 126, 216-218.

<sup>38</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10; cf. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 34, 45.

It is concerned with unchanging rules of nature. Morgenthau's example was bring water to 212° will boil it.<sup>39</sup> What he means is, as a consistent law, we can rely on this to occur. Whether the water is from Aberystwyth or Rome, it holds that around 212° water boils. It is by virtue of this observed consistency of action that one could induce a priori, 'mechanical' rules of action and reaction. Therefore, what Morgenthau means by "simple, consistent, and abstract" is that science deals with truth in that it addresses itself to eternal – as unchanging – laws of empirical reality. Once a scientific law is uncovered, thinking about its particular components and whether they will conform (whether they feel like conforming) to this law this particular time ceases to be necessary; the truth of a scientific law necessarily compels relevant empirical facts to obedience. What the natural sciences allowed was to make the natural world subject, via those rational laws, to human will; it bestows the power to manipulate the physical world however one sees fit.<sup>40</sup>

The thesis of *Scientific Man* regards science's attempt to colonize politics. Scientific method, which had already actualized control over nature, was also being applied to the social world. This understands the social world as characterizable as such by "simple, consistent, and abstract" rules, of universal applicability (e.g. instituting democracy and a liberal rule of law in a particular country will bring about peace - guaranteed<sup>41</sup>). Although this attitude is innocent enough, Morgenthau's analysis in many of his books shows that a scientific method, when applied directly to politics was actually responsible for

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<sup>39</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 126. Cf. Morgenthau, Hans J. "The Limitations of Science and the Problem of Social Planning." *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1944, 54.3), 174.

<sup>40</sup> This corresponds to the typical Frankfurt critique of instrumental rationality as derived from natural science, cf. Rasmussen, David. "Critical Theory and Philosophy." In *The Handbook on Critical Theory*. ed. David M. Rasmussen. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, Inc., 1999), 20, 22-23, 27 and Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School*. Trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 136, 185.

However, it is also the case that science even in the natural world is not so simple, consistent, and abstract, either. Despite this, scientific naturalism, which adopts a similar approach to the one Morgenthau characterizes, is becoming one of the most dominant trends in contemporary analytic philosophy of science. The work of John Dupré, Nancy Cartwright, and Ian Hacking all argue the limits of science with respect to philosophy, the social sciences, and even natural science arguing against such scientific approaches (e.g. Cartwright's *How the Laws of Physics Lie*). Morgenthau's work can be read as an antecedent for the anti-scientism movement in general. In fact, at time Morgenthau's work against scientism in the social sciences seems to anticipate Dupré's own work against scientism in human nature, especially in the context of rational-choice theory (Cf. Dupré *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15-25, 130-139.).

<sup>41</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 50-53.



aggravating, and even causing, real political catastrophes. The problem here was one of methodological error, not malicious intent. The issue was a typological difference between the objects under examination, which relevantly affects how they can be understood.

In contrast to science, politics is inherently imprecise and cannot be understood with the same degree of rational certainty as natural science.<sup>42</sup> This is because particulars matter in politics, and while certain actions may have resulted in a particular outcome in part circumstances, they may not under circumstances with only seemingly innocuous changes. Moreover, there is a tremendous degree of incertitude in the social world.<sup>43</sup> Social reality, distinct from the natural world, is a dynamic reality comprised of agents who act according to their intentions to realize some end, actions and intentions that cannot be predicted or fully understood. In the end, particulars matter in social reality and, to continue with the above example, while introducing democracy and the liberal rule of law may have established 'liberal' peace in historical circumstances, this guarantees nothing even if a successful past procedure is observed to the letter.

Given this, in response to 'political science,' Morgenthau says that politics cannot be reduced to a series of such scientific rules that are simple, consistent, and abstract because politics behaves to the contrary.<sup>44</sup> Attempts to make a science of politics cannot succeed, except through chance because politics concerns itself with particulars, actions in very specific conditions to affect those very specific conditions. It cannot address abstractions as such because such an abstracting will naturally eliminate some factors, which may be relevant 'now,' but were not when the rule was formulated. The methodological distinction to be made is between a rule-based understanding of empirical reality, science, and a non-rule-based understanding of empirical reality, politics. Particular variations may be of vital importance to 'politics' (e.g. nationality and cultural background) while they are of marginal importance to 'science' (e.g. the source of the water to be boiled).

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<sup>42</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10, 151, 210, 214, 220.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, 99-103, 125-126, 176.

<sup>44</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10.

Therefore, scientific derivations of rational political theories are insufficient to understand a dynamic reality because it does not lend itself to universal rule formulations like the natural world. Thus, following a strictly rule-based understanding to politics may undermine one's intent, such as peace, by ignoring particularities and unknowns that such a universalization would override. As Morgenthau characterizes 'scientific man,' "[he] appears as the true dogmatist who universalizes cognitive principles of limited validity and applies them to realms not accessible to them."<sup>45</sup> He then cites Edmund Burke, highlighting that the error of a 'dogmatic universalization' of social principles, ignores social reality, which is 'a chaos of contingencies' or 'an infinity of circumstance,' and does not admit to the universalization that 'scientific man,' whomever he is, seeks to categorize it as.<sup>46</sup> Because of the nature of the social world, *scientific knowledge cannot guide action*, because it does not account for particularities not already within an abstract formula.

### 3.2 The *Vita Activa*, the *Vita Contemplativa*, and Science<sup>47</sup>

The art versus science dichotomy of *Scientific Man* is not the only time he discusses science's attempt to colonize politics. In *Science: Servant or Master?* he subsumes the politics vs. science dichotomy under the more elaborate dichotomy of *vita activa* and *vita*

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<sup>45</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220.

<sup>46</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220.

<sup>47</sup> Regarding the similarities to Arendt here, both already shared much in terms of academic interests (e.g. Burke and Aristotle), but their relationship goes deeper than this. Not only does Morgenthau adopt Arendt's terminology from *The Human Condition* (which was one of his ten favorite books (Frei, 113) here, but the two became quite close, and Morgenthau was inducted into Arendt's "tribe," which entailed shared holidays, social parties, family events, and vacations (Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Hannah Arendt, for Love of the World*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), xiv-xv). They read and supported each other; while Morgenthau obviously agreed with aspects of Arendt's philosophy, she too shared Morgenthau's positions on foreign policy, especially with regard to Vietnam (Young-Bruehl, 383, 387.)). After the Eichmann publications and other public arracks, Morgenthau was her sole supporter and public defender at Chicago (Young-Bruehl, 349-358, 424-425). Later in their lives, Morgenthau became her 'public' escort. He even proposed "they convert their friendship into a marriage," and although she rejected his offer, they remained close (Young-Bruehl, 453-454). After she died, Morgenthau wrote her obituary for *Political Theory* (1976, 4.1).

While it is impossible to speculate exactly how great an effect this relationship had on their work, such prolonged interaction cannot have left them unaffected by each other – given the explicit similarities and the Arendt influenced reading that can be obtained from Morgenthau's work.

*contemplativa*.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, the fundamental issue remains the same – science is ‘colonizing’ roles that it cannot carry out properly.<sup>49</sup> In its most general form, the *vita contemplativa* is a theoretical understanding of reality – it does not interact with the world except as a spectator.<sup>50</sup> As above, it too formulates abstract laws, which are consistent and universal in their application. As a category, it subsumes both science and philosophy. The former seeks to understand empirical reality – what can be empirically knowable – while the latter investigates what is empirically unknowable – systematic attempts to understand what is beyond the senses (therefore, commencing at the aptly titled metaphysics).<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to the *vita contemplativa*, action is made identical to politics as the *vita activa*: “Politics is in its essence action” and “Genuine political thinking is action.”<sup>52</sup> Action is doing or, to be more precise, interfering with and affecting the empirical world. The active life signified involvement in political affairs; the *vita activa* corresponds to Aristotelian political naturalism<sup>53</sup> and this means a life without praxis (*inter-active* existence) is no

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 27, 61-64. This suggests the continuity of this issue throughout Morgenthau’s academic life – spanning his pre-*Politics among Nations* period until the end of his academic life. He also notes this about jurisprudence in “Positivisme mal compris” as positive law’s abandonment of metaphysics in its hostility toward anything but empirically verifiable truths, pp. 2-4 (cf. “Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law”), and in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* as the reduction of philosophy to empirical foundation and its transition to science on pages 2-3, 122-123.

<sup>50</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 61. It is significant that Morgenthau noted that also within the *vita contemplativa*, science was colonizing the traditional realm of philosophy, where it would suffer the same shortcomings it does in its attempt to systematize politics. Much of Morgenthau’s early work attacks neo-Kantian positivism because, among other things, it seeks to discard metaphysical notions and focus strictly on what is empirically observable. He did not pursue this much further, focusing instead the relationship between politics and science. Regardless, Morgenthau clearly recognized the importance of non-empirical/unscientific rational analysis. He does **not** say that, de facto, abstract principles have no relevance to politics Cf. “Positivisme mal compris.” p. 3-10; Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Decline of Democratic Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 283, 289-296; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 40-41. Cf. footnote 75.

<sup>52</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 34, 59, respectively.

<sup>53</sup> Morgenthau adopts Aristotelian political naturalism (we are naturally political beings owing to individual insufficiency and life is well lived when it is a *bios politikos*) in Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220. Cf. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 55-60, 66; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 168, 177; Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1945, 56.2), 1, 13. Lang, *Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*, 28.

Morgenthau diverges from Aristotle in his notion of insufficiency: the polis is necessary but likewise insufficient. Satisfying human insufficiency also requires a transcendent solution (which may not be forthcoming). Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 9-10; “Love and Power,” *Commentary*. (1963 35.5) 247-248.

‘human’ life. Morgenthau did not specify further what action meant, but Arendt categorized it as ‘sayings’ and ‘doings.’<sup>54</sup> As stated already, politics, as action, deals with the contingent and the accidental, which cannot be subsumed under consistent and abstract rules.<sup>55</sup> As contingent and accidental, every instantiation where action would be undertaken is unique in its composition of social ‘facts’ and these vary in their importance as their effect or influence on the instance.

Like in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a dichotomy between thought and action has been posited. Furthering the distinction between thought and action, Morgenthau claims that politics can be passively understood through theoretical exposition but only *post facto* – therefore while this can enlighten one as to what led to a particular outcome, it cannot provide insight into how one ought to act *in actual circumstances*.<sup>56</sup> He supports this with reference to Hegel’s infamous Owl of Minerva. The significance, however, is best captured by the paragraph’s opening: “One word more about giving instructions as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late to give it. As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formulation has been completed.”<sup>57</sup> It means that only an ‘actuality,’ an *is* (what has become existent, as well as what corresponds to its essence) can be idealized or conceptualized; a thorough understanding can only come from what is and can be observed, not what is becoming<sup>58</sup>; for guiding action and how one ought to act – what will become – looking strictly to past idealizations is insufficient because the actuality of the present event cannot be understood until after it has come into existence – the complexity of the social world, the limits of perspective, and the difficulty of judging the present, for example, present serious obstacles to this. One cannot have a total understanding of the present, only what is past (and thus actual). In other words, philosophy in this sense can only understand

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<sup>54</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 25, 175-188; Cf. Aristotle. *Poetics*. 1448b1 on the etymology of “drama”: from the verb *dran* – ‘to do.’

<sup>55</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 42.

<sup>56</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 37-39.

<sup>57</sup> Hegel. *Philosophy of Right*. Trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Clarendon Press, 1967), 12.

<sup>58</sup> Knowles, Dudley. *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 77-82.

what *is*, what has become, whereas *politics is a Becoming*.<sup>59</sup> The significance of this passage lay in that science too is limited in understanding Becoming for the same reasons Hegel states that philosophy, in this limited sense, is.

Something else is required and lacking from ‘theoretical’ knowledge, like science and philosophy as described, since it obviously seeks this totality of understanding.

Understanding of the present cannot occur in its totality because it is still forming – the sort of understanding that the theoretical provides cannot be joined to politics properly because politics deals strictly with forming the reality of the present, affecting change, aiming toward some desirable state. If abstract theoretical knowledge of the world can come only after it has ‘formed,’ and politics, as an ideal-type, does not relate to understanding the world but merely is a realizer of some potential existence, then science, as abstract theoretical knowledge, does not correspond to action – the realization of reality – because it cannot provide the appropriate knowledge.

To recap, Morgenthau discusses three ideal-type knowledge categories: ‘politics,’ ‘science,’ and ‘philosophy.’ Science and philosophy share that they attempt to systematize or theorize – in doing so, they deal with rules, or consistent truths, that are universally applicable in their abstract form. As such, they can be categorized as aspects of the “*vita contemplativa*.” These differ in their objects: science addresses empirical reality and philosophy addresses what is not empirical – e.g. metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. They both differ from the *vita activa*, because politics, as action, deals not with abstract and consistent truths, but with the particular, empirical, and contingent. Although still knowledge, it is not the same as what science and philosophy address. Political knowledge is not subject to that same precision as scientific knowledge because it has categorically distinct objects of knowledge that resist scientific method. Thus, politics is distinct from ‘science’ and philosophy, but it is still not clear why Morgenthau would make such a leap and conclude that politics is an art (a *tragic* art, moreover). After all, would it not be sufficient to say that social ‘science’

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. Trans Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 112.

and natural ‘science’ are two different types and, as such, they demand different epistemologies?

### 3.3 Rethinking the Political: Art as a Saving Sorceress?

It is from the very fact that politics and science are distinct types of knowledge that we can now proceed to why Morgenthau declares politics to be an art. Importantly, Morgenthau was not the first to claim that politics was a type of knowledge categorically distinct from ‘science’ and, comparatively, was imprecise, particular, and exceptional. Aristotle made an identical claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He writes on the method of political inquiry, “Our discussion will be adequate if its degree of clarity fits the subject-matter; for we should not seek the same degree of exactness in all sorts of arguments alike...for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept [merely] persuasive arguments from a mathematician.”<sup>60</sup> This is to say that the degree of precision and clarity in a discipline like mathematics simply cannot be matched by ‘softer’ disciplines, like ethics and politics, and neither should they be expected to provide it.<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle returns to this distinction with his virtues of thought: *episteme*, *techne*, *phronesis*, *nous*, and *sophia*.<sup>62</sup> To briefly expound: *episteme* corresponds to scientific knowledge, knowledge of universal and necessary laws, but induced from phenomenon; *techne* is knowledge of production (*poiesis*), or crafts, as distinct from action (*praxis*) that does not produce objects, and therefore knowledge of particularities and bringing them into being; *phronesis* is knowledge of action (*praxis*), where one have the ability to know how to choose a particular action, among different possibilities, to realize some valued end, while simultaneously being able to judge priority among valuable potential ends that are irreconcilable as well as the discerning the likelihood of their practical achievability<sup>63</sup>; *nous* is insight or intuition; *sophia* is wisdom and is related to discovering eternal truths but

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<sup>60</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terrence Irwin (Indianapolis; Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), 1.3 (1094b11-12, 25-26), pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> Hughes, Gerald J. *Aristotle on Ethics*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 16.

<sup>62</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.15, p. 151.

<sup>63</sup> I am indebted to Alessandro Ferrara for helping me to articulate this better; cf. Alessandro Ferrara. *Reflective Authenticity*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 55-56, 66.

truths which are not empirical (e.g. truths of origins and the greatest good), and as such is like *episteme* in its knowledge of universals.<sup>64</sup>

It might appear as if *episteme* and *techne* should be Morgenthau's focus, owing to his use of the word 'art' and the traditional dichotomy between *episteme* and *techne*, this turn out not to be the case. Although Aristotle's *episteme* corresponds to Morgenthau's analysis of 'science' (both deal with universals that are derived from empirical reality), Morgenthau defines politics as action and *techne* concerns only production and is apolitical in this specific sense. Political action is a strict property of *phronesis* in Aristotle's system.<sup>65</sup> Morgenthau's politics, then, should not correspond to *techne*. The question then arises, 'does the type of knowledge Morgenthau calls 'political' correspond to Aristotle's *phronesis*?'

Morgenthau's political knowledge does correspond to *phronesis*, but the connection between politics as an art and politics as *phronesis* requires two steps. First, Morgenthau obviously believed that politics as action was, in some way, 'aesthetic.' This is because politics, in dealing with the contingent empirical world, must determine how it is through aesthetics, de facto. *Empirical reality is accessible only aesthetically (via the senses) and judgments of it are contingent on perception in the broad sense; without aesthetic sensibility, action, and therefore politics, is impossible because it would not have any particular basis for reference* – hence politics inalienable particularity and the necessity of dealing with empirical reality always according to that particularity vis-à-vis aesthetics. Because politics, deals with particulars, i.e. empirical phenomenon accessed via the senses, it is aesthetic and can only be understood properly when it is approached as such. As requiring knowledge of particulars and how to (re)act properly to them, knowing how to 'perform' correctly in a particular situation is what makes politics an art. Aristotle, as well, recognized an aesthetic nature in *phronesis*, as what is needed to grasp the character of

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<sup>64</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.2-6.7, p. 151-152.

<sup>65</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.42, p. 154, 159.

particular states of affair is straightforward perception – one must be able to perceive the schema and the extension of a particular state of affairs.<sup>66</sup>

To repeat the line, “Politics is an art and not a science, and what is required for its mastery is not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and the moral strength of the statesman.”<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau laments the attempt to solve politics through the application of science, “The recognition of wisdom as a distinct quality of the mind has well-nigh disappeared from our culture...while its absence is sorely felt, the political actors, ignorant of what it is they are lacking, seek salvation in theoretical science.”<sup>68</sup> The problem is not a malicious intent, but rather a cheerful but naïve optimism that, through an inability to think beyond scientific knowledge, will prescribe error after error because of its faith in said method. In response, he attempts to revive other knowledge types.

It is here with wisdom that the second step, of identifying Morgenthau’s politics with *phronesis*, begins. By wisdom means “the gift of intuition, and political wisdom is the gift to grasp intuitively the quality of diverse interests and power in the present and future and the impact of different actions upon them.”<sup>69</sup> Wisdom is a type of intuition that judges how best to realize some universal, abstract normative criteria in some particular situation by deliberating about and determining the most appropriate action, in light of the limitations to knowledge and action presented by those particulars.<sup>70</sup> By its very nature, it cannot be scientific – but its relevance seems unquestionable as a mediator between ideal and reality: deliberating and discerning the most desirable possible outcome and that action which may achieve it given the specific place and time one is in and the limitations to what they know. As such, this approximates Aristotelian *phronesis*.

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<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, 64-65, 109-110.

<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 45. Cf. Bain, William. “Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered.” *Review of International Studies*. (2000, 26), 458.

<sup>69</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 45.

<sup>70</sup> Williams, 172-180.



Significantly, Morgenthau even presents the significance of the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* for his political realism in his most (in)famous book, *Politics among Nations*. It is none other than the fourth principle of realism,

Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the ineluctable tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action... *Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place...Realism, then, considers prudence – the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions – to be the supreme virtue in politics.* Ethics in the abstract judges action by its conformity with the moral law; political ethics judges action by its political consequences.<sup>71</sup>

‘Prudence’ is a typical translation of *phronesis*, (with political wisdom and practical judgment).<sup>72</sup> The supreme political virtue of prudence, as formulated, is exactly what Aristotle’s *phronesis* entails. Both argue that applied morality – in an abstract universal formulation, or ‘deontologically’ – *cannot directly*, as a practical impossibility, be applied to real action. There is some intermediary step in which prudence and deciding among possible actions to realize some reality most consistent with that deontological formulation.

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<sup>71</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations (Third Edition)*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 10 (my italics). There are many instances where Morgenthau defines the essence of political knowledge, and therefore the task of a statesperson or political theorist, as *phronesis*: ‘taking circumstances in their unique particularity before proceeding to universal principles.’ These include Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 10, 220; *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 10, 18, 73, 92, 108-109, 313, 331; Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Restoration of American Politics*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1-2, 17-18, 32, 43, 66-67; Morgenthau, Hans J. *In Defence of the National Interest*. (New York: Knopf, 1951), 34; Morgenthau, Hans J. *The Purpose of American Politics*. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 295, 323; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Another ‘Great Debate:’ The National Interest of the United States.” *The American Political Science Review*. (1952, 46.4), 983, 986-987; Morgenthau, Hans J. “On Trying to be Just.” *Commentary*. (1963, 35.5), 422; Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 41-42; Morgenthau, Hans J. *Essays on Lincoln’s Faith and Politics*. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1983), 62; Morgenthau, Hans J. “Human Rights and Foreign Policy.” In *Herbert Butterfield: The Ethics of History and Politics*. Ed. Kenneth W. Thompson. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), 102. Cf. Frei, 224-225.

<sup>72</sup> Lebow understands *Urteilskraft* and prudence as, in Morgenthau’s vernacular, self-control or *sophrosune* (Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 308). However, *phronesis*, not *sophrosune*, usually is translated as judgment or prudence. In addition, ‘*Urteilskraft*’ must be judgment.

Contextualized by writings like Kant’s *Third Critique*, Heideggerian and Frankfurt fascinations with ‘aesthetic’ judgment (Frei, 36-41, 169-170, 224-225), and Arendt’s *Lectures on Kant’s Third Critique*, it seems that the post-Weimar German understanding of *Urteilskraft* had a strong tie to Aristotelian *phronesis*. Importantly, however, *sophrosune* is conceptually linked to *phronesis*. *Sophrosune* preserves *phronesis* against corruption (and *akrasia*); *sophrosune* is even derived etymologically from *phronesis* (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.44, 155). Therefore, while Morgenthau’s political ethics was not explicitly about self-control, *phronesis* cannot be divorced from *sophrosune*.

This Aristotelian understanding also explains the distinction made in the second principle: “Political realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between what the desirable and the possible – between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.”<sup>73</sup> The moral message of realism cannot be a puerile notion of self-interested amorality.<sup>74</sup> These consistent appeals to morality need to be, and have not been, reconciled with what critics claim. Contrary to some claims, the fourth principle cannot argue ‘do whatever is necessary to realize a sought-after end,’ which would be a baseline for instrumentalism, without being internally contradicted by the rest of that principle’s formulation – Morgenthau is not saying morality is irrelevant, but clearly that there must be some sort of filtering process that occurs. This ‘filtering process’ is the virtue of *phronesis*. Additionally, it is implicit but undeniable that, *in order to filter those ‘abstract universal’ moral principles, one must already have determined their content.*<sup>75</sup> Thus, Morgenthau is attempting to neither deny morality nor affirm consequentialism. The distinction made is between what moral values can be realized through action and which must remain as ideals due to external, practical constraints. The type of knowledge allowing such distinguishing is not, and cannot be science, but what is commonly called wisdom or prudence.

Despite all this, one may still be unconvinced Morgenthau had *phronesis* in mind as his political virtue. After all, he never goes so far as to state explicitly that he is dealing with the Aristotelian virtue of *phronesis*; that is, except once. In a review, Morgenthau states, “political philosophy, to be fruitful, must make the Aristotelian distinction between what is ideally good and what is good under the circumstances.”<sup>76</sup> This Aristotelian distinction is between the virtues of *mallon sophia* and *phronesis*. While Morgenthau makes all those

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<sup>73</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics among Nations (Sixth Edition)*. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985), 7.

<sup>74</sup> Bain, 461.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 149-150, 156-157. As above, an important additional claim is hinted at. Morgenthau is not strictly arguing for a restoration of *phronesis*, but *sophia* as well. It is clear that scientism, as prioritizing and limiting all knowledge to *episteme*, is guilty of such positivism in narrowing legitimate knowledge to strict universal laws from empirical reality.

<sup>76</sup> Morgenthau, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 32.

references to particularizing universal values in concrete situations, it is clear that he has the Aristotelian virtue of *phronesis* in mind. Moreover, since politics is an active process, such a definition would seem to be the only sensible one since actions are always interpretations of abstractly formulated imperatives that are relative to the actors' particular context.<sup>77</sup> From its inalienable empirical nature, knowledge of political action, as *phronesis*, must be aesthetic; politics is an art, not a science.

#### 4.0 Human Political Behavior and the Tragic Understanding of Politics

Having determined why politics is an art, the way in which it is tragic can now be understood. But first, tragedy must be clearly defined. From the above definition on art, it must be the imitation of some possible actualities. However, there must be some unique criteria of what exactly makes art tragic, rather than something else (such as drama). A valuable contemporary discussion among Frost, Mayall, and Lebow<sup>78</sup> has outlined just what those possible occurrences are:

1. *The presence of genuine moral dilemmas*; this is to say that conflicting, irresolvable normative demands may be made upon or among actors, dilemmas which are irreconcilable and demand that the actor choose to fulfill a duty that may bring about an undesirable outcome because it will cause friction with another duty.<sup>79</sup> Consider the illustration of Antigone and Creon (duty to family versus duty to polis).<sup>80</sup>
2. *The divide between the outcome and what was intended, or 'peripeteia' (or tragic irony)*; this is to say that what a character desires to do and what they actually do often are contradictory; the outcome may undermine the normative intent behind the

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Ferrara, 62.

<sup>78</sup> Frost, Mervyn. "Tragedy, Ethics, and International Relations." *International Relations*. (2003, 17.4); James Mayall "Tragedy, Progress, and International Order: A Response to Frost." *International Relations*. (2003, 17.4), Lebow, Richard Ned "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science" *International Relations*. (2005, 19.3), and Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*.

<sup>79</sup> Frost, 480, 483. "At the core of every tragedy is an ethical struggle" Frost, 479. Cf. Ferrara "

<sup>80</sup> Frost, 483.

original act.<sup>81</sup> Oedipus fled Corinth to avoid his prophesized fate. He did not know (nor could he have known) that only on leaving Corinth could the possibility to murder his father arise, and it was on that road that Oedipus actualized his prophesy.

3. *The element of inevitability or fate*; this is to say that tragedy does not attempt to criticize bad decision-making on the part of character, but to illustrate the unavoidability of consequences, given the duty to abide certain norms (if the consequences were avoidable, pity would not be aroused and it would not be tragic).<sup>82</sup> Alternatively, the only way to avoid tragedy would be if actors possessed omniscience, the ability to foresee the consequences of actions perfectly; perspectivism limits one's capacity to analyze reality correctly. In turn, one is likewise limited in one's power to change reality effectively. Ignorance of these limits is the infamous *hubris*, against which realism cautions.

In addition, there seems to be a subcategory here. *Existence and fate are pre-determined, to some limited extent, by one's identity*.<sup>83</sup> Social identity constrains one's horizons and delimits contingent ethical obligations.

4. *Hubris*, or "the mistake of believing that we can transcend our status and limitations,"<sup>84</sup> it could also be characterized as the ignorance of a character's potential for *hamartia* – the possibility to err because of a justifiable (i.e. unpreventable and explainable) lack of knowledge about reality and self. To return to the example of Oedipus, in killing the stranger who attacked him on the road (*hamartia*), his *hubris* came to the front: he could not escape his fate, his belief that he was in control of his reality was wrong.
5. *Theodicy*; the absence of a correlation between suffering, goodness, and justice (Dostoevsky's Job is paradigmatic, here). Noble, beautiful, and good characters with the best intentions suffer the worst catastrophes, in spite of everything good about them. "[In tragedy,] virtuous people are victims of disease, death, and every

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<sup>81</sup> Frost, 483. cf. Lebow, "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science." (2005, 19.3), 332.

<sup>82</sup> Frost, 485-486.

<sup>83</sup> Frost, 484; cf. Lebow, "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science," 332.

<sup>84</sup> Lebow, "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science", 365.

kind of social misfortune. No amount of knowledge or power can protect against the kind of reversals tragic heroes encounter or the suffering they bring on.”<sup>85</sup>

Morgenthau would agree with the above points from the contemporary debate. He spends a large section of *Scientific Man* discussing peripeteia,<sup>86</sup> the fifth principle of realism deals strictly with moral dilemmas among states as well as identity and the importance of recognizing them to avert what conflicts it can<sup>87</sup> and the importance of recognizing the limits of knowledge and the ever present possibility for *hubris*<sup>88</sup>, and finally the fated, inevitable nature of conflict owing to the lack of absolute control of the outcome of acts and perspectivism.<sup>89</sup> The only addition to add is that there is no escape from the pathology of social action, except through the *deus ex machina* – salvation might exist on a manmade stage through a lever-operated happy-ending but not in the world, “under an empty sky from which the gods have departed.”<sup>90</sup> However, this does not exhaust the relevance of tragedy for politics.

Political science occurred naturally, following science’s domination of the natural world. However, this ‘scientific man’ is guilty of misdirecting politics. As discussed above, scientific theory cannot replace politics (as knowledge of action). Focusing on a science of politics does not contribute to meaningfully shaping reality and, at worst, aggravates reality by mistaken prescriptions based upon a rule-based approach. Since politics is action and characterized by present, particular circumstances, a science of politics attempting to

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<sup>85</sup> Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, 364-365.

<sup>86</sup> This is famously formulated as “Suspended between his spiritual destiny which he cannot fulfill and his animal nature in which he cannot remain, he is forever condemned to experience the contrast between the longings of his mind and his actual condition as his personal eminently human tragedy.” Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 122-167, 187-191; cf. *Science: Servant or Master?*, 52-60. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 39. Quotation from Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220; cf. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 61.

<sup>87</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, 12; Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 325-326. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 220-221.

<sup>89</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 160-167; Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 39; Morgenthau, “Another ‘Great Debate.’”, 983-984.

<sup>90</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 9-10. Quotation from Morgenthau, Hans J. “The Twilight of International Morality.” *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*. (1948, 58.2), 99. The *deus ex machina* was an indication of the death of tragedy: see Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 109, 111.

legislate rules of politics cannot properly prescribe what to do if unaccompanied by knowledge of particular analysis – *phronesis*. Against scientism, Morgenthau retorts, “Serious probing into the theoretical nature of politics is a symptom of the inability to create a purposeful political world.”<sup>91</sup> This statement and his above lamentation about ‘seeking salvation in theoretical science’ are indicative of something deeper.

The above-mentioned reference by Morgenthau to Nietzsche reads, “One does not need to share Nietzsche’s view that the positive valuation of science per se is a symptom of the sickness of a dying culture...”<sup>92</sup> In saying so, he adopts Nietzsche’s tragic diagnosis of society, regarding a correlation between science and culture – in particular the relevance of tragic art. Here, Nietzsche expounds a similar view on the limits of theoretical science. He characterizes proponents of this optimistic view as having the cheerfulness of a slave who has nothing great to strive for and no responsibility – someone who lacks the motivation and capacity for meaningful action.<sup>93</sup> Following upon this, Morgenthau presents the rise of ‘optimistic’ scientism in America as parallel to a decline in meaningful political action.<sup>94</sup>

Nietzsche’s full view on science and culture does not stop at merely criticizing science, but he contrasts a dying society’s positive valuation of science with the restorative pessimism of a society ‘overflowing with health’; a pessimism that derives from possession of the ‘tragic insight,’ which centers on the notion of peripeteia. To elaborate on this tragic insight, both Nietzsche and Morgenthau adopt Hamlet. For Nietzsche, “action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; [Hamlet feels] it to be ridiculous or humiliating that [he] should be asked to set right a world out of joint.”<sup>95</sup> Morgenthau moderates this, saying “[Hamlet] knows too much about the world not to be aware of the absurdity of action”<sup>96</sup> and “Hamlet, aware of the tragic tension between the ethics of our minds and the ethics of our actions, resolves to act only when he can act as ethically as his

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<sup>91</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 38.

<sup>92</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 35.

<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 78.

<sup>94</sup> Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 200, 203-205, 223, 238; in general 197-243.

<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 60.

<sup>96</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, 53-54; cf. Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 90 and Morgenthau, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 17, 308

intention demands and thus despairs of acting at all...”<sup>97</sup> Hamlet’s insight is that there is a divide between the intent of the actor and what action achieves: knowledge of one’s place and limits within a dynamic reality carry a paralyzing awareness of one’s ability to realize justice in existence. Tragic art recognizes this condition in its imitation of it. It is through a ‘cheerful’ denial of the tragic insight that societies lose the knowledge and the ability to affect the world meaningfully. This is for one reason, which is connected to the rest of Nietzsche’s work: by denying the fullness of the aesthetic world, pathology and all, one denies a meaningful living, perhaps through faith in some transcendent world. With the death of god, however, there is nothing left but this aesthetic world. Denying the aesthetic world, however implicit, amounts to nihilistic scientism,<sup>98</sup> and this devalues meaningful, directed action and seeds the decline of a culture that believes this.

Morgenthau, reminiscent of Nietzsche, says, “The lack of tragic art in our age is but another manifestation of the rationalist unawareness of the tragic element in life. The same unawareness expresses itself philosophically in the belief in continuous progress and in the trivial optimism for which life dissolves into a series of little hurdles which, one after the other, increasing skill cannot fail to overcome.”<sup>99</sup> The cheerful, yet detrimental, optimism that cannot understand how political action occurs and succeeds corresponds to an absence of tragic art in a culture. Where present, tragic art is a recognition of the ‘tragic element in life,’ because it is an artistic imitation of those real elements in an attempt to cope with them. More generally, art is a reflection of beliefs and values; a culture’s art reflects its perception of reality.<sup>100</sup> The absence or diminishing recognition of tragic art is then one symptom of a society’s inability to recognize that this pathology to action actually occurs. *The society does not carry an understanding of how to act according to particularities nor can it recognize the pathology of real action – it does not understand politics through phronesis and it does not appreciate tragic art because it cannot understand itself.*

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<sup>97</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 189

<sup>98</sup> Nihilistic because science cannot provide any source of meaning, only empty instrumentality. Cf. Weber, Max. “Science as a Vocation.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills. (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1959), 139-147.

<sup>99</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 207. cf. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, 228

<sup>100</sup> Morgenthau, *The Decline of Democratic Politics*, 33.

It is symptomatic of an inability to understand the potential pathologies inherent to acting and knowledge of actions – *phronesis* – when a culture does not have a keen grasp of tragic art. A society ignorant of *phronesis* and tragedy does not, and cannot, act with the same degree of responsibility and prudence for achieving a meaningful reality as a society that does. It can only retreat into abstractions that deny the real world. The cheerful optimism of scientism, in its mistaken approach to politics as an object comprehensible as an *episteme*, is responsible for masking the potential tragic nature of social action, as outlined above, and sowing the seeds for its own demise – this optimistic and purely theoretical orientation, uncoupled from a broader approach, suffers from *hubris*.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, the tragic insight of the fictional character of Hamlet is an imitation of a legitimate insight into reality, most prominent in the practice of politics.<sup>102</sup> In describing the practice of statecraft, Morgenthau says,

[A statesman] must commit himself to a particular course of action in ignorance of its consequences... He must face the impenetrable darkness of the future and still not flinch from walking into it, drawing the nation behind him. Rather than seeking unattainable knowledge, he must reconcile himself to ineluctable ignorance. His is the leading part in a tragedy, and he must act the part.<sup>103</sup>

It is within this context that Morgenthau's infamous reference to the social world can be understood: indeed it is a chaos of contingencies but "not devoid of a measure of rationality if approached with the expectations of Macbethian cynicism."<sup>104</sup> The political art is interference in a state of becoming, to realize some normatively desired end. It is a becoming, but it is tragically so because there is no certainty that one's best-intentioned actions will not reverse from the sought outcome. Approaching politics with any other understanding would be *hubris* in its ignorance of the pathology of action, and accordingly would increase the likelihood of catastrophe. Because it cannot be understood according to the *vita contemplativa* distinction, scientific attempts are not only erroneous but also dangerous. Politics is not only an art, but a tragic one. With this tragic understanding of the

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<sup>101</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 222.

<sup>102</sup> Morgenthau, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Morgenthau, *The Restoration of American Politics*, 103.

<sup>104</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, 151.



political art, Morgenthau would replace a science of politics – a priori, a dysfunctional science – to foster political success, such as peace.

## **5.0 Reconsidering Morgenthau's Obstinacy: The Tragedy of the Political Art**

To return to the objection of incorporating aesthetics into politics (How can realism create an autonomous sphere of political analysis if it smuggles in a non-political tragic analysis?), the response seems to be that this misses the point – a proper tragic analysis is indistinguishable from politics. The very possibility of successful and meaningful politics rests upon understanding its underlying tragic, aesthetic nature.

The contemporary debate hinges on tragedy as a means to better understand politics' potentiality for catastrophe, according to the above criteria. In this way, art is an imitation of political reality. However, following Morgenthau, the relationship between politics and art goes deeper. Art does not just imitate politics and aid in understanding it, art is politics. This is because politics, as acting to bring about, is by definition 'art.' Because existence requires action on an agent's part, it follows that existence has this political quality. Moreover, politics is an aesthetic phenomenon because it deals with empirical phenomenon, i.e. what is understood first through and must be validated by the senses. Politics, moreover, is always directed toward particular phenomenon, which resist subsumption under universal concepts. Universalistic abstraction, while valuable theoretically, does not do justice to understanding how to act in particular circumstances, actions intended to affect those very particular circumstances. The type of knowledge that politics requires accepts those particulars, in their full, aesthetic context, and understands how to bring about some state with specific intervening action. This type of knowledge corresponds to Aristotle's *phronesis*.

*Phronesis* should be, however, a knowledge of tragedy as well, because of the very real uncertainties and limitations inherent to it – which the contemporary debate does an excellent job of highlighting. By grasping the link between the recognition of certain

characteristics of reality through a society's art, it becomes clear that tragedy is more than this, it is an essential recognition of both the aesthetic nature of politics and the limited nature of *phronesis* (conceptualized by *peripeteia*, genuine moral dilemmas, inevitability, *hubris*, and theodicy) to effectively realize whatever normative ends political agents strive for. Politics, and *phronesis*, do nothing to guarantee success in any course of action, and this is imitated best by tragic art. An inability to recognize elements of reality in tragic representations is a symptom of a society that has become unable to affect meaningful change in the world. Thus, the tragic understanding plays an essential role, albeit insufficient alone, for political knowledge, that is, for *phronesis*.

These conclusions about politics are important because, against claims to the contrary – then and now – politics is not scientific and attempting to understand it as such can lead to catastrophe. An attempt to make a science of politics must at least implicitly deny the above conclusions in not recognizing these characteristics of real political action. Thus, the aim here is not to deny the validity of science or attempt to state that *phronesis* is the only legitimate type of knowledge, but that the use of certain virtues of thought are appropriate to the object it would understand, and attempting to cross them (such as a scientific understanding of politics) is a dangerous game to play. Because of this Morgenthau could not concede that politics was neither art nor tragedy because this was the foundation for his argument that politics was not a science. Stating that politics was anything but an object of *phronesis*-type knowledge would lead to the same conceptual confusion, and then catastrophe, that he was struggling to oppose. Thus, politics is an art, in contradistinction to what we understand as science. This entails profound consequences for how one understands how to act politically, consequences which were the subject of his other books, such as *Scientific Man*, *Politics among Nations*, and *Science: Servant or Master?*

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